00084742

# BURMA AS I SAW IT

1889-1917

Digitized with financial assistance from

HT Parekh FOUNDATION

An Initiative by HDFC

WITH YOU, RIGHT THROUGH

on 15 October, 2018

PAGODA ON THE SHWEPĂLIN ROCK, OVERLOOKING THE CHINDWIN RIVER

# BURMA AS I SAW IT

## 1889—1917

### WITH A CHAPTER ON RECENT EVENTS

BY

R. GRANT BROWN

INDIAN CIVIL SERVICE, RETIRED

WITH THIRTY-SIX ILLUSTRATIONS AND A MAP

84742

METHUEN & CO. LTD.
36 ESSEX STREET W.C.
LONDON

84742

*First Published in 1926*

00084742

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

TO

MY WIFE

# PREFACE

THESE memories cover a period of twenty-seven years, during which I served as magistrate and revenue officer in Burma. The title is inapplicable to the last chapter and to parts of some of the others; but is a guarantee that, except where history and statistics and recent events are dealt with, the book is nearly all of it the result of my own observation and experience in Burma, and not based on second-hand information. In general it will be found to pass the test applied to oral evidence before it can be admitted in a court of law; that is, the things described as seen were seen by myself, and the things described as heard were heard by myself. For this very reason it may be more open to criticism than books compiled from the statements of various observers. Either my observation or my memory may be at fault. I can only plead, in the first place, that direct evidence, even if not always reliable, is on the whole better than hearsay; and secondly, that agreement among writers is not always conclusive proof of the truth of a statement, as authors have been known to copy from each other or to repeat uncritically what they have heard in conversation.

I have not always had to trust to my memory, however. A great deal of the matter in the book

especially in the second, fifth, sixth, and seventh chapters, was put on record and published while I was still in Burma. Thus in Chapter II I have used my *Gazetteer of the Upper Chindwin* and papers in the Journal of the Burma Research Society and the Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies; in Chapter V my *Education in Burma*, published in 1917 under the pseudonym of Cypher; and in Chapter VI a paper on Pre-Buddhist Religion which was given to the Folklore Society in 1921, and most of which was a compilation from my own contributions to the journals of the Royal Anthropological Institute, Royal Asiatic Society, etc. The translations of songs in Chapter VII appeared in the Journal of the Burma Research Society, and the rest of its contents are from a paper read before the Royal Asiatic Society but not published; and an account of my stumpy-tailed monkey was printed in the *Rangoon Gazette* about twenty years ago.

On the other hand a good deal of Chapter IV and the notes thereon, and of Chapter XII, are the result of a recent prolonged study of official records in the India Office in the light of my Burma experience. For Burmese history up to the first British annexation I have relied entirely on Mr. Eric Harvey's brilliantly written *History of Burma*, of which he kindly sent me a proof. Other sources of information have been acknowledged in the text or in footnotes.

I have to thank many friends for criticisms, help, or suggestions, especially Sir Charles Morgan Webb, C.I.E., Mr. H. O. Reynolds, Professor Noteştein, Mr. Eric Harvey, Mr. John Katz, Mr. F. B.

Kirkman, Dr. C. O. Blagden, Mr. W. W. Skeat, Mr. C. A. Snow, Sir George Grierson, K.C.I.E., and Mr. Harold Clayton, C.I.E.

All the photographs are my own, except those of the carved panel facing p. 40 and of the pulleys facing p. 42. These I owe to the kindness of the Director of the Victoria and Albert Museum.

R. G. B.

*4th August*, 1925.

# CONTENTS


| | | PAGE |
|---|---|---|
| | PREFACE | vii |
| | LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS | xiii |
| | NOTE ON PRONUNCIATION | xv |
| CHAPTER | | |
| I. | THE COUNTRY | 1 |
| II. | THE PEOPLE | 16 |
| III. | DOMESTIC LIFE | 45 |
| IV. | COMMUNAL LIFE | 63 |
| V. | EDUCATION | 90 |
| VI. | RELIGION | 102 |
| VII. | THE DRAMA | 118 |
| VIII. | THE FAR NORTH—THE UPPER CHINDWIN | 130 |
| IX. | THE FAR SOUTH | 137 |
| X. | MY MENAGERIE | 146 |
| XI. | A MAGISTRATE'S REMINISCENCES | 154 |
| XII. | RECENT EVENTS AND THE FUTURE | 168 |

*NOTES TO CHAPTER IV*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| A. | VILLAGE ADMINISTRATION | 201 |
| B. | MARKET RENTS | 205 |
| C. | THE LAND | 211 |
| D. | CAPITATION-TAX | 227 |
| | INDEX | 231 |

# LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS


| | |
|---|---|
| MAP OF BURMA | *Front Endpaper* |
| PAGODA ON THE SHWEPĂLIN ROCK | *Frontispiece* |
| | FACING PAGE |
| THE CHINDWIN FROM THE SHWEPĂLIN ROCK | 6 |
| POUNDING RICE AT TĂMANTHI, UPPER CHINDWIN | 6 |
| A RAFT ON THE CHINDWIN | 14 |
| THE CHINDWIN FROM THE RIDGE AT KĂLEWA | 14 |
| MAN AND WOMAN OF KANTI STATE, UPPER CHINDWIN DISTRICT | 16 |
| NAGA GIRL WEAVING AT HEINSUM, UPPER CHINDWIN | 18 |
| KONGSAI CHINS OF THAUNGDUT STATE, UPPER CHINDWIN DISTRICT | 18 |
| WOODEN PANEL REPRESENTING A HERMIT ASLEEP | 40 |
| THE OLD MAN, THE SICK MAN, AND THE RECLUSE | 40 |
| PULLEYS FROM VILLAGE LOOMS, KĂTHA DISTRICT | 42 |
| A HERMIT (IN STUCCO ON WALL OF TEMPLE AT MINGIN) | 44 |
| MA KIN ME AND MA YIN ME OF BASSEIN, IN DANCING DRESS | 50 |
| IN CHARGE | 52 |
| GIRLS WAITING TO JOIN IN PROCESSION AT INITIATION CEREMONY | 60 |
| VILLAGE SCHOOL AT MĂSEIN, UPPER CHINDWIN | 90 |
| TYING THE SACRED THREAD | 106 |
| IN THE ORDER OF THE YELLOW ROBE | 106 |
| NĂGĂYON PAGODA AT MYITTHA, KYAUKSÈ DISTRICT (SHOWING INFLUENCE OF SNAKE-WORSHIP) | 110 |

FACING PAGE

A BUDDHIST NUN, PYAPON . . . . . 112

SHWENĂBE, THE SNAKE WOMAN . . . . . 112

NAWYĂTA'S QUEEN . . . . . 116

THE KING OF MYODYI . . . . . 116

PRINCESS PĂDUMA AND THE ROBBER . . . . . 122

THE GOOD KING PEINMĂTHAYA . . . . . 124

PAUK TYAW THE ROBBER . . . . . 126

LĂSUNKAM, OVERLORD OF THE TĂRO VALLEY. . . . . 130

NAGA CHIEF OF LASA . . . . . 132

LĂSUNKAM AND HIS FOLLOWERS AT PORPOISE POOL . . 132

NAGA GIRLS TAKEN CAPTIVE BY LĂSUNKAM . . . . 134

MĂSHATWÖ, HOLDING AN AXE SIMILAR TO THAT WITH WHICH HIS WIVES AND CHILDREN WERE DECAPITATED. . . 136

A MĂKWARE LEADER . . . . . 136

MUHAMMAD KASIM AND OTHELLO . . . . . 146

BILL . . . . . 146

## NOTE ON PRONUNCIATION

Sanskrit and Pali words are written according to the Geneva convention, but in many respects this is not applicable to Burmese. The Government system is followed for Burmese names where it attempts to represent the sound and not the spelling, as it always does except in the combinations *ky, gy,* pronounced (and spelt in this book) *ty, dy.* The pronunciation shown below should be given to Burmese names and words as printed. NE = Northern English; SE = Southern English.

| Symbol | Pronunciation | |
|---|---|---|
| | When isolated or final as in | Before a final consonant as in |
| a | f*a*ther | NE m*a*n |
| ă | *a*mong | — |
| aw | l*aw* | — |
| e | r*ei*n | s*e*t |
| è | b*e*d | — |
| i | mach*i*ne | *i*t |
| o | NE g*o* | — |
| ô | — | SE b*o*ne |
| u | r*u*de | p*u*t |

Initial *t, k, p, s* are pronounced in some words without aspiration, as in French, in others with more aspiration than in English; and initial *th* as in *thin,* but *th* in the middle of a phrase more often as in *this.* The sounds represented by the symbols *t* and *k,* when final, are now often reduced to little if anything more than a glottal check. In some words also final *n* and *ng* represent a mere nasalization of the vowel, often followed by a glottal check. Other symbols representing consonants are pronounced as in *long, hush, chin, me, we, you.*

# BURMA AS I SAW IT

## CHAPTER I

## THE COUNTRY

IN 1893, when I was a young Assistant Commissioner, I received a letter addressed from Nice to Burma in my mother's bold clear hand. The Nice postmaster, evidently not knowing where Burma was (the French call it, to be sure, Birmanie), kept the letter for a week and then sent it to Marseilles; where it lay for three weeks before being forwarded to Paris, and thence to New York. Eventually it found its way to me.

Burma is now less likely to be confounded with Bermuda, but there are many English people who do not know that it is part of the Indian Empire, lying between India proper and China, and inhabited by people who are neither Indian nor Chinese and who profess the Buddhist religion.

It is easy to see from the map that the northern part of Burma is driven like a wedge between two great empires; it is less easy to realize that the most important geographical fact about the country is its isolation. The appearance of Burma on the map is deceptive. It seems to form a link overland between India and China, with the additional advantage of communication with the outer world by sea. In reality it is cut off from both those countries by a succession of mountain ranges covered with dense forest, inhabited, if at all, by wild and warlike tribes, and alternating with malarial valleys. These are a better protection and a greater hindrance to intercourse than a wide expanse of ocean would be. Communication with other countries is,

and has probably always been, mainly by sea. But even this way of approach was rendered difficult in the past by a dangerous coast-line and by the necessity for rounding Cape Negrais (Burmese Năgăyit, "in the dragon's coils") in the south-west or the long line of the Malay Peninsula in the south-east.

It is true that the Arakan Division, which lies by the sea in the west of Burma, is not separated by any natural obstacle from the Chittagong Division in Bengal. But Arakan is little more than a coastal strip, partly hills, partly intersected by waterways; exceedingly malarial, and cut off from Burma by a mountain range. Though this is the direct route from Calcutta to Rangoon, and the least mountainous, there is neither road nor railway. The absence of a railway is due to the difficult country: not to lack of railway enterprise, for Burma contains seventeen hundred miles of railways; nor to want of desire for intercourse, for in the ten years before the census over two and a half million people, mostly from India, came to Rangoon by sea.

Running north-north-east from the Chittagong border to the confines of Tibet and the eastern end of the Himalayas there is a broad mass of mountains, inhabited by wild tribes and seldom crossed. In the extreme north the country is mostly unexplored. Here to the east, on the side of China, is one of the most remarkable natural barriers in the world: a series of mountain ranges, all over fifteen thousand feet in height, running parallel from north to south and separated from one another by the upper waters of the Irrawaddy and the Salwin of Burma, the Mekong of Siam, and the Yangtsekiang of China, all within a hundred miles. Farther south, in the latitude of Bhamo, and across the Shan States from Mandalay, there is some intercourse with China, but the country is still mountainous and thinly populated. The same may be said, as we go farther south still, of French Indo-China and Siam. It is only when we approach the latitude of Rangoon that intercourse with Siam becomes comparatively easy, but here it is not of sufficient importance for a road or a railway to be made.

Southernmost of all is the Isthmus of Kra, where one may travel in a day by elephant from Burma (a Siamese-speaking Burma) to the Gulf of Siam. Before steam-power was fully developed there were projects for a canal at this point to shorten the route to the Far East, avoiding the long journey—it was long then—by way of Singapore.

We expect, in a mountainous region, to find communications difficult and the population scattered. But on the Burma frontiers it is not only the mountains that give trouble. In Europe we are accustomed to populous valleys and bare mountain-sides; in Burma these conditions are often reversed. Thus the Kăbaw Valley, which is really a fertile plain lying between Manipur and the hills to the west of the Chindwin, is nearly all uninhabited forest; whereas the mountains to the west of it are cleared to their tops by Naga hillmen. There can be no doubt as to the reason for this curious phenomenon. It is the prevalence, in all these fertile plains and valleys watered by pure mountain streams, of a deadly form of malaria which is as important a factor in Burma's isolation as the mountain ranges themselves.

Burma extends through more than eighteen degrees of latitude, or as far as from the south end of Scotland to Gibraltar. The main part of the country consists of little more than the valley and delta of the Irrawaddy and its tributary the Chindwin, surrounded on three sides by mountains. To the west, across a mountain range, is Arakan, its northern end adjoining Lower Bengal. Eastward are the Sittang valley and, farther north, the wide mountainous area of the Shan States; and to the south-east a second coastal strip, Tenasserim, is separated from Siam by another mountain range, less formidable and sinking to low hills towards the south.

In the far north the winters are cold and foggy, the summers steamy and wet. Then comes a dry zone with fierce summer heat tempered by monsoon winds; then the delta, with warm winters and torrential rains lasting from May to October; and lastly the long strips of coast, with an even heavier rainfall, generally exceeding two hundred

inches a year. In the far south the coolest months of the year, owing to the heavy rains, are July and August.

The climate of Burma has a very bad reputation, which dates from the time when Arakan and Tenasserim were annexed to the British Empire after the first Burmese war of a hundred years ago. Kyaukpyu, a place on the Arakan coast with pleasant bays, sandy beaches, and cool breezes, was selected as a sanatorium for our troops. The result is not recorded in the archives of the India Office, but there is a tradition of heavy mortality from malaria. Kyaukpyu is now regarded as the most unhealthy district in Burma. In the words of a Deputy Commissioner who kindly sent me a note on the district when I was posted there in 1896, "the miserable inhabitants walk about feebly; even the children forget to play." I never saw a fat man all the time I was there.

Burma is free from the terrific heat of the plains of northern India. Even in the dry zone the period during which the thermometer may be expected to exceed a hundred degrees in the shade during the day is very short. This is owing to the early monsoon, which seldom fails to bring cool breezes, if not rain, soon after the beginning of May. Health in Burma generally means freedom from malaria, which is conveyed, as is now well known, from man to man by the anopheline mosquito.

Burma might well be called the land of mosquitoes. But it is not the malaria-carrying anopheline which has impressed itself on my memory. Mosquitoes are most numerous, and most troublesome, in the rice-plains and marshes of the delta, where there is but little malaria. On my first night at Măubin, on the Irrawaddy, thirty odd years ago, I undressed outside my mosquito-curtains. In an instant hundreds of mosquitoes had driven their probosces into my back. An hour later I was awakened by my pony kicking and tramping in the stable. I went down, and stroked his neck to soothe him. Then I found that my hand was red with his blood, and I learnt that mosquito-curtains were necessary for beasts as well as men. Later I went snipe-shooting with a friend. We separated for a

time, and met again in the rice-fields. Each laughed at the appearance of the other. His face was black with mosquitoes, and when I looked at the back of my hand I saw that it was black too, the insects sitting so close together that the skin could hardly be seen.

Yet this part of Burma is not unhealthy. The mosquitoes which are so numerous are not of the dangerous kinds. The absence of these is explained, perhaps, by an experiment which I once carried out in Upper Burma with a tumbler of water, a piece of muslin to cover it, and four mosquito larvæ, of which one was culex (the commonest kind) and the other three anopheline.[1] In three days a single mosquito, a culex, was flying about under the muslin. Its larva had eaten the other three.

The most malarial parts of Burma are Arakan and the north, where mosquitoes are not numerous. One of the deadliest places I was ever in was Tămanthi, on the Chindwin. The Indian military police who were stationed there were dosed heavily with quinine once a week, but they still went down with fever. There were ponds behind the village, and I thought I might find anopheline larvæ there. I could find none; but a saucerful of water from the footprint of a buffalo in the village street was thick with them. I poured its contents into a tumbler, which I covered over with muslin. In a day or two the tumbler contained several score of mosquitoes. The remedies tried were exclusion of cattle from the village, and improvement of the village street with sand from the river; but I did not remain long enough in the district to see the result. Another place on the same river appeared healthy enough. There was a laterite soil, and no standing water to be seen. It was actually proposed for the new headquarters of the district. Yet the children's blood, when tested, was found to be full of malarial parasites, and anophelines were numerous in the houses. The Sanitary Commissioner, with whom I visited the place, was puzzled, until he found anopheline larvæ in the water which remained after rain in the hollow

[1] The anopheline larva floats on the surface of the water; the culex hangs from it at an angle.

leaves of a plant. This plant grew in great profusion wherever the forest had been cleared in the neighbourhood of the village, and was, apparently, the only source of malaria.

The anopheline flourishes in the rainy season, from May to October. The eggs are deposited by the female mosquito in small collections of water left after heavy rain. The most feverish tracts are not marshes, but well-drained land at the foot of hills, where pure rain-water is deposited in great quantities but quickly flows away, leaving puddles which dry up in a few days. The remedy is to fill in the puddles and to cover up or get rid of everything which holds water.

It is impossible, however, for a traveller to avoid infection, and it is therefore necessary for him to use quinine. We learn from Manson's *Tropical Diseases* that the malarial parasite is developed in the stomach of the anopheline mosquito; that it is injected into our blood through the mosquito's proboscis; that it enters the blood corpuscles, and there divides into numerous segments or spores; that the corpuscles after a time burst, setting free in the blood these spores and a toxin which is the immediate cause of fever; that a certain number of the spores thus freed then enter new blood corpuscles, where the process is repeated, so that the number of parasites is immensely increased; that the duration of this cycle is two or three days; that an injection of blood containing parasites into a normal individual is followed by an attack of fever after ten or twelve days; that quinine passes through the body in a few minutes; and that ten grains taken at the end of an attack and thereafter three times a day for a week are an almost certain cure, causing the parasites to disappear from the blood. I also understand that when the parasites have disappeared from the blood some of them may remain latent in the body for years, and that in this condition, and also when they are inside the blood corpuscles, they are immune from the action of quinine.

The inference which, as a layman, I make from these facts is that a small dose of quinine taken daily at the most

likely time for exposure to infection—say two grains every evening—should destroy the parasites while they are yet few in number and before they enter the blood corpuscles; and that, while a person who has once contracted malaria can never be sure of immunity, one who has never been infected, and who takes a small dose of quinine daily while exposed to infection, should escape altogether. At any rate, the experiment seems worth trying by those going to a malarial country for the first time. A small dose of quinine causes no inconvenience, and is very easily taken. On the other hand it *is* certain that a heavy dose taken once a week has often failed as a prophylactic.

In the Upper Chindwin district I travelled during the rains by Government launch, tying up usually near a village at night. Besides the crew of the launch I had with me clerks, messengers, and servants. The villages on the river bank downstream were not very malarious. Those in the north of the district were full of infection. My first tour northwards during the rains resulted in twenty-one out of the twenty-two men who were with me having fever, either during the tour or within a few days of their return. Thereafter I served out five grains of quinine daily to every man on the launch, whenever I went north. In the course of four years I had only two cases of fever, and in both of these it was doubtful whether the quinine was actually swallowed. The dose was, I think, a good deal more than was needed to prevent fresh infections.

Burma contains thirteen million people. Of these no less than nine dwell in the basin of the Irrawaddy and its tributaries. Of the rest, following the description on p. 3, Arakan contains rather less than a million, and the Sittang basin, with the plain-lands lying near the mouth of the Salwin, rather more; and the Shan States a million and a half. The coastal strip running southwards from the Salwin mouth to the Isthmus of Kra has only a few hundred thousand inhabitants.

Rangoon, the capital, lies twenty-one miles from the sea on a river of the same name, connected by canal with the

Irrawaddy. Its population increased, in the thirty years ending with 1921, from 180,324 to 341,962. It was an unimportant place when Lower Burma (except Arakan and Tenasserim, which were already British) was annexed in 1852, but is now the third port in the Indian Empire. The people are mostly Indians, the Burmese numbering less than one-third of the whole.

Mandalay, which was the capital of Upper Burma before the third and last annexation in 1886, has declined from 188,815 in 1891 to 148,917 in 1921, in spite of the fact that its inhabitants are exempt from direct taxation. It was founded in 1857 by King Mindôn, who moved his court there from Amărapura, now but a village. It lies on the Irrawaddy, and is the terminus of railways from Rangoon and the Shan States; but it is not an important port, it has no great industries, and its numerous handicrafts, carried on in the home, are declining.

The only other towns of any importance are Maulmain in Tenasserim, Akyab in Arakan, and Bassein in the west of the delta. Only Maulmain has more than sixty thousand inhabitants. All three towns are ports for foreign trade and also rice-milling centres. There are smaller ports at Tavoy and Mergui. Burma is a country of villages. There are few towns because three-fourths of the population is agricultural, and because such industries as exist are mostly carried on in the home. On the other hand there are few isolated houses, because the people prefer to live together in villages. Farmsteads such as we have in Europe are seldom seen. If the fields are too distant for the workers to return at night to the village, field-huts are erected for the cultivating season.

My impressions of Burmese history are of three great kings and after them of three British annexations. The kings are Nawyăta of the eleventh, Băyinnaung of the sixteenth, and Alaungpăya of the eighteenth century. The annexations are of Arakan and Tenasserim in 1824, Pegu and the rest of Lower Burma in 1852, and Upper Burma in 1886.

Nawyăta reigned at Păgan, a hundred miles south-west of Mandalay; now an uninhabited plain dotted with hundreds of pagodas. He ruled at first over but a small part of Upper Burma. To the north and east were the Kădus and the Shans; to the west, across a mountain range, the Arakanese; to the south the Pyus, and farther south still the Mons. The last two kingdoms were probably superior in civilization to his own. He conquered both, besides subduing the northern Arakanese and receiving the homage of some of the Shan chiefs. He broke the power of the old priesthood, which taught a corrupt and sensual form of Buddhism, and introduced from the south the purer religion which has since become firmly established throughout the country. Tradition credits him with the foundation of the irrigation system which still exists in the eastern part of his kingdom.

In the thirteenth century Nawyăta's empire fell to pieces under the impact of the Tartars. Thereafter his successors ruled, as vassals of China, over a dwindling kingdom not much larger than his original one. Arakan regained its independence, and the rest of the country was divided among Shan chiefs, nominally representatives of the Chinese suzerain. The centre of Burmese power gradually shifted to Taungu in the south-east, and here arose Tăbin Shweti and his loyal comrade Băyin Naung, who were successively crowned kings of Pegu (the Mon capital) and Upper Burma, and invaded Arakan and Siam. A second invasion of Siam under Băyin Naung was successful, and he brought thousands of prisoners back to Burma.

Băyin Naung's dynasty survived, with some vicissitudes and the transfer of the capital from Pegu to Ava near Mandalay, till the middle of the eighteenth century, when the Mons revolted and for a short time actually occupied Upper Burma. Then appeared Alaungpăya, hereditary chief of a small town some fifty miles north of the capital. He defied the conquerors, and raised the country-side against them. In the course of a five-years' campaign he made himself master first of Ava and finally of Pegu, which he destroyed. Not content with this, he invaded

Siam, but failed to take the capital, and died on his way home.

The history of Burma, as told by the native chroniclers, is little more than a monotonous record of palace intrigue and palace revolutions; murder, massacre, and civil war. Sometimes the country was divided into petty States warring against each other; at others it was more or less united under a strong ruler who destroyed his rivals' capitals and carried away their people into slavery. Even then the land did not enjoy peace, for the conqueror must needs lead his armies into neighbouring countries, where they dwindled away in long campaigns and useless sieges. Thus the Burmese were able thrice to destroy the capital of Siam, but never to rule there; and though an increase in population was always the aim of their rulers, who to that end imported great numbers of vanquished foreigners, they only succeeded in making Lower Burma a wilderness. Though favoured by nature and rich in resources, it was but scantily inhabited when the conquest of Arakan in 1784 by one of Alaungpăya's successors brought him into contact with the British in Chittagong.

The cruelties inflicted by the Burmese caused many thousands of Arakanese to flee across the border. Their extradition was demanded, and refused. Among civilized nations such refusal is a matter of course, but the Burmese king was both arrogant and ignorant, and regarded it as a legitimate grievance. A real grievance, the raids made by some of the fugitives into Burmese territory, was removed by British action. But such complaisance was regarded as weakness, and our envoys were habitually insulted by the court. Meantime the Burmese were extending their conquests. Assam, then independent, was overrun, hideous cruelties practised, and thirty thousand of its inhabitants deported to Burma. Here also fugitives crossed our border, and demands for extradition were refused. British territory, too, was used as a base by the Assamese raja in defending his country. The Burmese decided on the conquest of Bengal, which they thought would be easy. Not only the king but the people desired war. "For

twenty-nine years," says Mr. Harvey, "the Burmese had habitually crossed the frontier at will, occasionally murdering and enslaving British subjects, destroying lakhs' worth of property, holding the Company's elephant hunters to ransom, claiming the surrender of panic-stricken refugees, and seeking to drive their slave-gangs home through British territory."[1] At length, in 1823, the Burmese seized an island in the long-settled British district of Chittagong and killed the Indian police posted on it. Even then the Governor-General contented himself with a letter of remonstrance, which was not answered. Kachar, which had been taken under the Company's protection, was also invaded, and four British officers killed. In March 1824 the Governor-General declared war. Rangoon was taken without serious resistance, the Burmese driven out of Assam, and Arakan and Tenasserim occupied. A Burmese army sent from Ava was defeated, and a force advanced by land and river to within a few marches of the capital Here the Burmese king accepted the terms offered, which included the cession of Arakan and Tenasserim.

Relations with the Burmese Government did not improve after this first annexation, and in 1839 the British Resident was withdrawn. "In 1852, owing to a series of outrages committed on British subjects by the Burmese Governor of Rangoon, for which all reparation was refused, the British again declared war against the King of Burma."[2] This time there was little resistance. Pegu was annexed in the same year.

Mindôn, wisest and most civilized of Burmese kings, now became ruler of Upper Burma, and relations with the British improved. But in 1878 he was succeeded by his son Thibaw, and the next year seventy of the men, women, and children of the royal family were murdered at Mandalay, where Mindôn had established his capital. Such massacres were not uncommon in Burmese history, but relations became strained, and the British Resident was once more withdrawn. "While the Indian Government was unrepre-

[1] Harvey, *History of Burma*, p. 302.
[2] Report on the Administration of Burma for 1921–22, p. 10.

sented at Mandalay, representatives of England and France were welcomed, and two separate embassies were sent to Europe for the purpose of contracting new and if possible close alliances with sundry European powers. Matters were brought to a crisis towards the close of 1885, when the Burmese court imposed a fine of twenty-three lakhs of rupees upon the Bombay-Burma Trading Corporation, and refused to comply with the suggestion of the Indian Government that the cause of complaint should be investigated by an impartial arbitrator."[1] An ultimatum was sent in November, and rejected. King Thibaw at the same time issued a proclamation to his subjects calling on them "to drive the British heretics into the sea."[2] Within a few days a flotilla carrying British troops had steamed up the river and crossed the frontier. When it reached Ava the king signified his submission. He was sent down the river, and afterwards conveyed to Ratnagiri on the Bombay coast. Here he lived, on an allowance from the British Government, with his "middle queen" Supăyalat and his children, until his death in 1916. A proclamation was issued declaring Upper Burma to be permanently added to the British dominions; on the 1st January, 1886, according to the official histories, but a copy in my possession is dated the 3rd March. It announced an amnesty for persons who had taken up arms against the British Government if they would surrender themselves before the 30th June. Unfortunately the ease with which the king's surrender was obtained had been deceptive. The people had still to be dealt with. The Burmese troops had not been disarmed, and many of them carried on a guerilla warfare for several years. "The resistance offered was nowhere organized and formidable; the majority of the people acquiesced without a murmur in the new order of things; but everywhere, in Lower as well as in Upper Burma, rebels swarmed in small bands over the face of the country, rarely venturing into the open, and trusting for success to the unhealthiness of their jungle refuges not less

[1] Report on the Administration of Burma for 1921–22, p. 11.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 11.

than to their mobility and intimate local knowledge of the ground. Against guerrillas of this type regular troops were of little avail, and special measures had to be taken for coping with the special conditions of resistance. A stringent disarmament policy, and the supersession of regulars by military police, stationed thickly in small posts over the disaffected areas, gradually wore down the undisciplined opposition; the political ends that for a time made heroes of the outlaws dropped out of sight by degrees; and long before the last of the original gangs had been hunted down or broken up, it had been recognized by all that each fresh success of the police meant so many men of bad character accounted for and so many pests to society removed." [1] When I was posted to Myingyan, in Upper Burma, in 1890, it was still dangerous to go outside the station without an escort; and I heard many stories of that long war: how Snadden of the police was ambushed and left for dead with eight bullets through him; how Nangle had ridden down a dacoit leader over the open plain, and before he could use his revolver had received a backhander from the Burman swordsman that cut clean through the heavy brass buckle of his uniform; how Tydd, a magistrate, had returned after a reconnaissance to the main body of his little force of Indian police, only to find them all lying dead with gaping wounds.

I will try to describe some of the impressions left on my memory by those parts of Burma in which I have lived or travelled. On the Arakan coast they are of white beaches backed by dark forest; the rhythmic plash of oars lulling me to sleep at night, and the scent of rotting fish brought by the wind across the broad estuary of the Kălădan River. Travelling was by sea, river, and creek. I had once to deliver judgment in a local case on a rocking schooner, pronouncing the last words in the nick of time before retiring to my cabin. On another occasion the steamer on which I was going from Cheduba Island to the mainland ran onto a rock; where we remained for four hours,

[1] *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, Provincial Series, Burma, vol. i. p. 26.

buffeted by heavy seas and waiting for the tide to rise and take us off, while the French priest fingered his rosary and the Superintendent of Police stood at the gangway with a loaded revolver to prevent the Chittagonian crew from deserting in the only boat.

At Pagoda Point, in the south-west corner of Burma, I pitched my tent in a monastery garden among the heavy-scented champac-trees; and after the day's work strolled along the clean white sand, where myriads of tiny red crabs, the hosts of Mara,[1] scampered for their holes at my approach; and then, dropping my light garments, dived through rollers breaking many feet above my head, and swam luxuriously in the warm sea beyond the surf.

In the far north, on the Chindwin River, my memories are of forest-clad mountains and cold river fogs; clear streams, and rocky gorges; a whirlpool in which the little launch heeled over till half her deck was under water; patches of yellow rice-fields surrounded by forest, where the jungle-fowl came out to feed in the cool of the evening; hedgerows of wild roses on the river bank; pleasant Burmese villages, with flower-gardens and white pagodas; and evil-smelling huts of naked hillmen. Farther south, where the Chindwin joins the Irrawaddy, they are of rich islands of silt, planted with beans and tobacco, their edges crumbling into the river as the steamer passed; sandy tracks running between cactus hedges; and fields of sesamum and cotton and tall millet, with here and there a cluster of palms marking a village.

At Mandalay I am once more driving a fast-trotting Burma pony along the dazzling dusty roads; or galloping on a winter's morning on the grass-land between the city wall and the moat; or dining in the club, then occupying a part of the king's palace, amid pillars decorated with glass-and-gold mosaic; or standing at the top of Mandalay Hill, with the city at my feet almost hidden in trees, to my right the river and the Săgaing hills topped with white

[1] The Evil One, the enemy of the Buddha. There is a legend that these crabs are the soldiers of his army, miraculously transformed when he marched them against the Enlightened One.

A RAFT ON THE CHINDWIN

THE CHINDWIN FROM THE RIDGE AT KĀLEWA

pagodas, and far to my left the blue mountains of the Shan States; or picnicking under the mango-trees on the Myitngè River, where thousands come once a year to feed the fish and plaster gold-leaf on their backs as an act of piety.

In the delta my memory is of endless rice-plains, broken here and there by shade-trees hiding a village, but sometimes stretching away clear to the horizon; muddy creeks, and dark forest; and warm rain, driven under the eaves at the onrush of the monsoon, or falling steadily, day after day and week after week.

Even in the delta there are some low hills or bits of rising ground, and on one of these stands the great golden pagoda at Rangoon. A new arrival in Burma sees at first nothing but fringes of mangrove as he approaches the coast and steams up the river. A hideous and desolate country, he may well think. Then the pagoda comes into sight over the trees. It is the first outstanding object he meets with as he enters the country, and the last on which his gaze lingers as he leaves it. Whether blazing in the noon-day heat, or glowing red at sundown, or shining through the morning mist on the river, it is a beautiful and inspiring sight, typical of the country and a fitting ornament to its gateway.

## CHAPTER II

# THE PEOPLE

THE village of Maukkălauk lies on the River Chindwin, four hundred and fifty miles from its junction with the Irrawaddy, in the wild mountainous country of the north-west corner of Burma. When I visited it about 1910 its people talked the Kăchin language, wore Kăchin dress, followed Kăchin customs, and were spirit-worshippers. Their headman told me that they had left Assam when his father was a boy; that in Assam they wore white clothes and spoke some language of which he did not even know the name; and that they had dwelt for some time among the Kăchins of the Hukong Valley, many days to the north of Maukkălauk, and had there adopted the Kăchin language, customs, and dress. Now, white clothes are worn by the Hindus of Assam, but not by the Kăchins or any of the other races in the neighbourhood as far as I know. Thus in the course of two generations Assamese Hindus have apparently been converted into Kăchin tribesmen, and have all but lost trace of their origin.

The Kăchins have no writing, and there was, of course, no school in the village; but the people of the neighbouring villages were Buddhist Shans, and the Maukkălauk children went to their monastery schools. Here they learnt Shan, became Buddhists, and began to follow Shan customs. When they are grown up they will be indistinguishable from the Shan villagers around them. The community will have been converted from Assamese Hindus to Kăchin spirit-worshippers, and then to Shan Buddhists.

Shan speech and customs, however, are giving way to Burmese in the Upper Chindwin valley. Following the

MAN AND WOMAN OF KANTI STATE, UPPER CHINDWIN DISTRICT
(KĂCHIN-SPEAKING, BUT PROBABLY NAGAS)

usual Buddhist practice, the Shans of the Chindwin invite monks from more civilized places to settle among them and teach their children. Though the Shans conquered Assam some centuries ago and spread over this wild country, the centres of Shan civilization are far away on the other side of Burma. Burmese is a more useful language than Shan; a Burmese monk costs no more to keep; and Shan villagers may just as well call in a Burmese monk to teach their children, and so enable them to meet the people down the river on equal terms. It would not be rash to prophesy that in a few generations the people of Maukkălauk, once Assamese, then Kăchin, and then Shan, will be indistinguishable from Burmans.

Now let us consider a larger community, inhabiting a group of villages lower down on the Chindwin. The Tămans, as these people are called, number about eight hundred. Their language, like Kăchin but unlike Shan, belongs to the Tibeto-Burman group,[1] and is unwritten. They have a tradition that they came from China, where they wore trousers, ate with chopsticks, and generally followed Chinese customs; that they migrated from China across the Irrawaddy to the site of what is now the Indawdyi lake, between the Irrawaddy and the Chindwin; that the lake was formed suddenly, drowning thousands; that the survivors fled to the mountains west of the Chindwin, to be safe if another deluge came; that here, cut off from the rest of the world, they lived the life of the hillmen, and dressed like Nagas, with only a strip of cloth to cover their nakedness; and that at last they came down to the Chindwin, adopted Burmese dress, and became Buddhists. Nevertheless, they still worship their old god. I was present at one of their sacrificial feasts. Under the altar was earth said to have accompanied them from China all through their wanderings. I was shown a cannon-ball which, I was told, had been fired at them by the Chinese as they fled from their old home. After some cocks had been sacrificed, and the omens taken from the position of their feet, a pig was killed with a club,

[1] In the Census of 1921 it was included in the Chin languages, but no evidence to justify this classification is forthcoming.

his blood smeared on every worshipper, and his flesh cut up and placed on the altar with chopsticks for the god. No one in Burma eats with chopsticks except the Chinese, and it is well known that tribal and national customs linger on in religious ceremonies long after they have been abandoned in ordinary life. This and the admission of the descent into savagery make it unlikely that their curious story is an invention.

Unlike the little community at Maukkălauk, the Tămans have clung to their language all through their wanderings from China. But it is giving way to Shan, which is spoken by their neighbours; and Shan, as I have said, is likely to disappear before Burmese. In a few generations the Tămans will probably call themselves Burmans.

Let us take now a much larger group—the Nagas. Most of them live in Assam, in Hill Tracts, under an administration specially adapted to a very primitive people, and in the no-man's land between Assam and Burma, where they are free to follow customs such as raiding, head-hunting, and human sacrifices which would not be permitted under our rule. In some tribes both men and women go entirely naked in their own villages. Yet these people speak a language closely allied to Burmese, and when they come down to the Chindwin and adopt Burmese dress, language, and customs they become indistinguishable from Burmans in a generation or two. On the Chindwin, below the Tăman country, are many pleasant villages, clean and orderly, with rose-gardens in front of the houses. They have pagodas, monasteries, and lay schools. Crime is almost unknown. The people wear Burmese dress, speak Burmese, send their boys to the monastery and their girls to the lay school, bathe daily in the river, and are to all appearance Burmans. Yet some of them admitted to me that, two or three generations earlier, their ancestors had been naked unwashed Nagas living in the mountains to the west and north. The process was still going on. Higher up the river, a few miles inland, were villages of Nagas who had come to live under our protection and were beginning to wear Burmese dress. They still held their religious festivals, at which they were accustomed to

get drunk on rice-spirit distilled by themselves. My English assistant happened to visit one of these villages during a festival, and was amazed to find the whole population naked and all the men drunk. The headman attempted to address him, but fell into the river as he spoke. When these people become Buddhists they will forswear alcohol, which is unknown in the Burmese villages of the Upper Chindwin.

The Kădus number over forty thousand, and live in Kătha District to the west of the Irrawaddy. Their language is another member of the Tibeto-Burman group, and is unwritten. They wear Burmese dress, and are Buddhists. They are the small remnant of a people which only a few generations ago spread over a far wider area, extending to the border of Manipur and including the present headquarters of the Upper Chindwin. There is no reason to suppose that all but a remnant of this people has been exterminated. The other Kădus have adopted Burmese as their language, and call themselves Burmans; that is all.

The Chinese annals up to the twelfth century call the people of Burma Piao, and the Burmese chronicles mention a Pyu people as having occupied Burma along with the Burmans, Kădus, and others. No people or language of that name now exists. But stone inscriptions have been found, over a large area in Central Burma, in an unknown language which may be that of the people called Piao by the Chinese and Pyu by the Burmese chronicles. In particular, there is an inscription of the twelfth century, found near Păgan, which gives a text in Burmese, Mon, Pali, and the language supposed to be Pyu. Pali is allied to Sanskrit, and is the language of Buddhist literature. Of the languages of Burma proper only three, so far as we know, were ever reduced to writing, and of these one has apparently disappeared. How many descendants there now are of the people who spoke this language we cannot tell, but we may safely assume that most of them at least are now called Burmans.

Lastly, Lower Burma, excluding Arakan, was formerly the country, not of the Burmese, but of the Mons, who speak a language of quite a different family, as we shall presently see. The Mons are better known in Burma as the Tălaings—

a name which seems to be derived (like Kling, the term applied to southern Indians in Malaya) from Telinga, an old name for part of southern India. The name Tălaing is applied to them by the Burmese, but repudiated by the Mons themselves. They limit its use to descendants of Indian settlers who married Mon women.[1] They were conquered by the Burmese in the eleventh century, recovered their independence two hundred years later, were again subjected in the sixteenth century, and remained under Burmese rule, except for a short interval, until the British annexation. After the last conquest, in the eighteenth century, their language was suppressed by the Burmese, and at the last census only a third of a million people returned themselves as Mons. Yet their civilization is older than that of the Burmese, and greatly impressed early European travellers. When the Burmese conquered the Mons in the eleventh century they took over from them their alphabet and their form of Buddhism, and imported from the Mon country large numbers of monks, scholars, and craftsmen. Patavino's *Geography*, published in 1597, calls Pegu the city "clarissima totius Indiae." Caesar Fredericke, a Venetian traveller, wrote about the same time: "There is not a king on the earth that hath more power or strength than this king of Pegu. . . . For people, dominions, gold, and silver, he far exceeds the power of the Great Turk in treasure and strength." These comparisons are, of course, fanciful, but they show the impression made on the Venetian's mind. More definite is the description of the city by Ralph Fitch, who visited it a few years later. He mentions an old town, containing houses of bamboo and thatch with brick store-rooms in which valuables were kept in case of fire; and a new one within the walls, in which the houses were of wood and covered with tiles. The ordinary Burman house is still of bamboo and thatch, and the use of wood and tiles indicates a standard of comfort which was probably not reached again (for Pegu was utterly destroyed soon after Fitch's visit) until the British occupation.

[1] Mr. W. G. Cooper, in the Journal of the Burma Research Society, June, 1913.

Why have I troubled the reader with the histories of all these communities, from a mere village on the Chindwin to the Peguan nation which so impressed early travellers with its civilization? Mainly because it is necessary, before talking about the Burmese, to show what the word means. We have seen that the Burmese tongue was spoken over a much smaller area than now even a hundred and seventy years ago, and that most of the people whom we call Burmans, or Burmese, are descended from ancestors who spoke languages other than Burmese. That is the first thing we have learnt from these histories. We have also learnt how easy it is for a community to lose all the outward characteristics, other than physical, which are generally supposed to indicate race; how peaceful migrations may take place among uncivilized peoples; how a semi-civilized community may descend into a state hardly better than that of naked savages if forced to live in an inaccessible mountainous district; and how, on the other hand, whole communities of naked and ferocious savages may within two or three generations change into gentle, law-abiding people as civilized as any villagers in Burma. No doubt similar changes have gone on elsewhere, but it is not often that we have a chance of observing them. They are usually too slow, and too remote from us in time. In Burma they are recent and rapid, and it is this that makes the country, and especially its north-west corner, so interesting to the ethnologist.

The term Burman, then, includes all people, whatever their origin, who speak the Burmese language. What sort of language is Burmese, and what are its relations to those spoken, or formerly spoken, by the various peoples I have mentioned?

The language, as now usually pronounced in Rangoon, contains eleven vowels, of which three may be with or without nasalization; thirteen consonants, of which four may be with or without aspiration and nine with or without voice; and a glottal check. The vowels are the five which we pronounce in 'you need a fast walk'; the two in 'pudding', with their nasal forms; and the four contained in the French words 'au même étage', with a nasalized form of the last.

The consonants are the four contained in 'pockets', with their unaspirated and their voiced forms; the five in 'the long man,' with their unvoiced forms; and the four in 'hush', 'we', 'you'. The glottal stop is often heard in the cockney and Scotch pronunciation of 'not', written in novels as 'no' ' or 'no'.

Burmese is a tone-language. That is, many words are distinguished from each other only by the tone in which they are spoken. Thus *pa*, pronounced with a level or rising tone (as in English 'Pa ?'), means a box made of basket-work, of the kind now imported into England from Japan. If uttered with a falling tone (commonly used by southern Englishmen in stressed syllables, as in "He's my *Pa*!") it means a frog. Most Englishmen ignore the tones when speaking Burmese. One can imagine the bewilderment of a servant when he is told by his master (who really only wants the thing he keeps his clothes in) to bring him a frog: a bewilderment which only increases as the indignant Briton lays more and more stress on the word in the belief that he is thereby making its meaning unmistakable to the idiot whom he has had the misfortune to take into his service.

When I learnt Burmese in England I was taught, like the other young civilians of my time,[1] to ignore such distinctions in speaking, and also the difference between the aspirated and unaspirated consonants; for in those days it was imagined that one could know a living language, and even have some pretensions to scholarship in it, without being able to speak it correctly. The tones are easy enough, but the unaspirated *t*, *p*, *k*, *s*, though natural to a Frenchman, are really difficult for an Englishman to pronounce. As a junior magistrate I was aware of these distinctions, though still unable to make them; and I knew enough of the language to be able to examine witnesses without an inter-

[1] There has been a vast improvement in this respect since then. Indian civilians are now trained in phonetics and taught the spoken language before they go to Burma, and there is at least one thoroughly competent teacher at the universities. On the other hand the departmental examinations in Burma, partly for want of competent examiners, are still mainly tests of the kind of linguistic knowledge which is most easily acquired but is least useful to an administrator.

preter. While in this stage I wished to refer in court to a witness whose name, pronounced with a certain combination of tones and aspirated or unaspirated consonants, had an obscene meaning in Burmese, though as correctly uttered it sounded perfectly respectable. Naturally, I refrained as long as possible from pronouncing it. The name was as much tabu to me as was that of the Chinese Emperor to his subjects before he began to call himself Henry. I described the man instead of naming him. This did very well for a time, but at length I came to a witness who could not be got to understand what person I was referring to unless I mentioned the name. I decided that I must take the risk. The Burman police-officer who was prosecuting, and who sat at the table below me, had, I knew, a keen sense of humour. I should soon see if I made a mistake. Taking my courage in both hands, I uttered the fatal name. The officer's head was out of sight, bent over the table, but his broad back shook, and I knew I was wrong.

The Burmese alphabet was borrowed from India, probably through the Mons in the eleventh century. It was invented for the representation of an entirely different sound-system, and must have been from the first hopelessly unsuitable for expressing the sounds of the Burmese language. Since it was introduced great changes in pronunciation have taken place, and further complications have been caused by the false derivations of ignorant scribes. The Frenchman's *mot*, that English people spell a name Cirencester and call it Northampton, is more applicable to Burmese than to English, for there are few written words in which the sounds of the letters taken separately have a logical relation to the pronunciation of the whole word. One inconvenient result of this is that there is no way of representing most foreign words to a Burman in the Burmese alphabet, though the sounds composing the word may be quite common Burmese sounds. Such simple words as *yes*, *cry*, *loud* cannot be written in Burmese characters, though all the sounds in them are Burmese. Moreover, the characters, composed as they are of circles with a small opening on one or other of the four sides, are unsuitable for printing, being quite illegible when the ink runs. Even bad

Burmese writing is easier to read than some Burmese newspapers. It is time the Burmese abandoned this absurd foreign alphabet, and used an adaptation of the Roman,[1] which educated Burmans themselves, after a few days' practice, would be able to read far more rapidly. But one can get used to anything, and a hundred years ago the missionaries actually chose the Burmese alphabet as a basis for the representation of Karen, a language of another group till then unwritten.

Burmese, like English, but to an even greater degree, is monosyllabic (apart from words of foreign origin) and rich in particles, some of which are as puzzling to us as those in 'make up', 'make up to', 'make out', 'break-up', 'break-down' must be to a foreigner. But there the resemblance ends. The order of the words, generally speaking, is reversed, except that the subject of the sentence, if expressed at all, usually comes first, and that a qualifying noun (or possessive pronoun) precedes the noun it qualifies. The verbal particles and auxiliary verbs which correspond to inflections in an inflected language are placed after the verb; otherwise the main verb of a sentence is always last, so that 'he said that (they) were going' must be translated 'going were that say did'. The particles which perform the function of what we call prepositions follow the noun. Most adjectives are really verbal roots placed before the noun with a particle intervening, as in 'work-ing man', and all adjectives can be so used; but there are a few which may be placed after the noun without any particle. There are no relative pronouns, 'box mak-ing man' being used for 'the

[1] By the use of certain conventions Burmese can be written in the Roman character, with the aid of a few diacritical marks, without ambiguity. This was done in my *Half the Battle in Burmese*. But it would be far better to use one symbol for each sound, as suggested in my paper *A Common Alphabet for India*, published in the Journal of the East India Association for January 1913. For the latest and most authoritative work on Burmese pronunciation see the admirable *Burmese Phonetic Reader* by Miss Armstrong and Professor Pe Maung Tin. The system employed there is too elaborate for ordinary use, but could easily be simplified. The need for a more accurate system than that prescribed by Government is seen in the name which some Burmans now write Myint (instead of the prescribed Myin) in order to convey the fact that the *n* is dropped and the vowel nasalized!

man who made the box.' Simple questions calling for the answer 'yes' or 'no' are indicated by a particle at the end of the sentence; others by one at the beginning (or somewhere before the verb) and one at the end. The negative is expressed as in the French 'ne . . . pas'. For 'yes' and 'no' one says 'is so', 'is not so', or repeats the verb, as they do in southern Ireland. There is no word for 'have'; 'I have' is 'me with is,' but different words must be used for 'there is' and 'it is.' There are no articles. The subject of a sentence, if obvious, is not usually expressed by a pronoun, as in English, but is omitted; nor is a verbal particle used to indicate the person. The only inflections are a shortening of the vowel in the possessive of nouns and pronouns and a change of tone in the verbal particle (the word for finish) which expresses the perfect. Not only does the root remain unaltered, as in 'work-ing' (which, though we see it as an inflected form, may just as well be regarded as a root followed by a particle), but there is a wealth of particles which take the place of inflections, and are infinitely more varied and elastic. A single particle, too, sometimes expresses what with us requires a whole phrase.

Thus from the root *thwa*, meaning 'go', we have *thwa mè*, 'shall go'; *thwa daw mè*, 'shall go if you give me leave'; and combinations without number, including such long ones as *thwa-dya-ze-ya-ba-lein-mè*, which might be translated 'It will probably, sir, be necessary to let them go'. It happens that the order of the words in the last sentence is exactly reversed in English. Thus the particle *mè* indicates the future, *lein* uncertainty, *ba* politeness (which I have tried to express by adding 'sir'), *ya* necessity (or opportunity), *ze* causation, and *dya* the plural. The ingenious grammarian of Rangoon College who invented a paulo-post-perfect tense in Burmese (with a Pali translation of 'paulo-post-perfect' for the benefit of Burmese children!) would, perhaps, have called *thwa-dya-ze-ya-ba-lein-mè* the polite contingent future tense of the compulsory causative mood; but in order to be consistent he would have had to invent dozens of other such names.

If, on the other hand, to the root *yaik*, meaning 'strike',

we add the particle *tè*, the resulting expression may mean 'I strike', or 'you strike', or 'he strikes', or 'we strike', and so on. It may also mean 'I struck', 'I was striking', etc. The fact that the act of striking takes or has taken place can be expressed without any indication as to time, person, or number. Not only so, but the expression *yaik tè* may equally well mean 'try to strike'; for all Burmese verbs of action may express merely an attempt to do a thing unless a particle or other verb is added to show that the act is accomplished. An Englishman may think he has been told by a Burman that he saw A actually strike B, when what the Burman meant was merely that he saw A aim a blow at B and miss him. Thus Burmese lends itself admirably to the making of vague statements, as anyone who has had to question a Burman delinquent knows. To put the matter differently, the absence of inflections makes possible general statements which we find a difficulty in framing, owing to the necessity which our language imposes upon us of choosing between the present and the past, the singular and the plural, the masculine and the feminine, and so on. What caller has not wished that he could refer to a junior member of the family without using either 'him' or 'her'?

With the names of things and actions, however, we find an opposite tendency, common in primitive languages. There is no Burmese word for 'brother'; there is one word for an elder brother, and another for a younger brother. There is no word for 'uncle'; there is one for a father's elder brother, another for a father's younger brother, another for a mother's elder brother, and another for a mother's younger brother. Altogether Burmese is lacking in general terms, but well provided with words for particular things, states, and actions. It has, for instance, more words for the different kinds of taste than we have, including one for the taste of milk, white of egg, etc. Colloquially, as a language for everyday use, it is rich and expressive enough; as a vehicle for abstract thought it is poor. For abstract terms it has to borrow from Pali (the language of the Buddhist religious books, allied to Sanskrit) to an even greater extent

than we borrow from Latin and Greek; and but few Pali words are included in the language of the common people.

With minor exceptions, this description is true of all the languages of the group called Tibeto-Burman, including those spoken by the Nagas, Kăchins, Tămans, Kădus, and Pyus of the communities mentioned above. So far as the order of the words is concerned, it is generally true also of Japanese and in greater or less degree of the other languages (Korean, Manchu, Mongolian, etc.) which are now usually placed in the Altaic family. In Japanese the particles have begun to coalesce into something approaching inflections, while the language is far less monosyllabic; but these conditions indicate merely a stage in development. Japanese, as might be expected in a more advanced civilization, is a more highly developed language than Burmese. In Burmese, as in Chinese and in English, the monosyllables are to a great extent the result of phonetic decay; on the other hand a monosyllabic language may be built up into a polysyllabic one. I was surprised to find that the first text I learnt in Japanese could be translated into Burmese word for word without altering the order. There are many curious resemblances. Thus, to take a Japanese conjugation from Chamberlain's Handbook, *kitai* (want to come), *kimasu* (will come), *kite* (having come), *kita* (came), *kitara* (if . . . had come), *kitaredo* (though . . . had come) have their counterparts in the Burmese *la-dyin-dè*, *la-ba-mè*, *la-bi*, *la-dè*, *la-yin*, *la-be-dè*, which mean the same and are constructed in much the same way; in both languages the old future ends in *-n*; the Japanese *ne* (provincial *no*) and the Burmese *naw* both mean 'won't you' in the expression 'you will, won't you?'; and both languages turn surds into sonants after a nasal.

These resemblances are the more remarkable, as Chinese differs in structure from both Burmese and Japanese almost as much as it is possible for two languages to differ. In Chinese the object is placed after the verb, and subordinate sentences follow the main statement; on the other hand particles indicating time, etc., and the relation of the verb to the rest of the sentence precede the verb. One would think there was a difference in racial mentality. As Sir

George Grierson says in his introductory volume to the *Linguistic Survey of India*, "the order of thought in a sentence throws considerable light on the mentality of the nation to which the speaker belongs."

Yet all authorities (including Sir George Grierson, the greatest of all) agree in placing the Tibeto-Burman group in the same family with Chinese and the Tai languages, which follow the same order as Chinese.[1] Though the resemblance in vocabulary, apart from words which may have been borrowed, is not great, there is a good deal more than there is between Burmese and Japanese, and this factor is decisive. Resemblance in structure is not in itself a proof of common origin.

So far I have made no mention of the Mon language. It is generally agreed that it belongs to an entirely different family. The nearer relatives of Mon within this family are found in the hills of Chota Nagpur, west of Calcutta, and among the Khasis of Assam, certain hill-tribes in the Shan States, the Anamites, the Khmers of Cambodia, the Nicobarese, and some wild tribes in the Malay Peninsula. More distant relatives are the Malayan and Polynesian languages and the Maori of New Zealand.

The languages of eastern Asia may thus be regarded as mostly belonging to three great families, which may be called Altaic, Sinic or Sino-Tibetan (Chinese being the chief member), and Indo-Pacific or Austric. Burmese, Shan, Kăren, and most of the other languages of Burma are included in the second family, while Mon, which was until lately the language of Lower Burma, belongs to the third.

These great linguistic differences existing within the confines of Burma lead one naturally to expect an equal divergence of physical type. We should expect, for instance, the Kăchins to resemble the Burmese closely, the Shans and Siamese to be as different from them as the Chinese, and the Mons to belong to another racial type altogether. But what do we find? I have seen Kăchins who, dressed in Burmese clothes, still looked like Kăchins, but I have never seen a

[1] All of these are tone-languages, like Burmese, but on the other hand some Tibetan dialects have no tones.

person of whom I could say that he belonged to the Mon and not to the Burmese type. More than this, the Cambodians seem to be indistinguishable from Burmans. At Saigon I saw dock-labourers who seemed such unmistakable Burmans that I spoke to one of them, only to find that he knew no Burmese. Nagas are equally indistinguishable from Burmans when dressed in Burmese clothes, and so, in varying degrees, are Siamese (Shans are generally fairer), Malays (unless they are of the Arab type, and presumably of Arab descent), and even people so far afield as Javanese and Filipinos. Many of the Japanese and Burmans who are to be seen in European dress in London streets are hard to tell from each other, though the Japanese are usually fairer.

On the other hand I have seldom found any difficulty in distinguishing the Chinese I have seen in England from both Japanese and Burmans, even when slanting eyelids do not proclaim their race. And with Indians there is no difficulty at all, unless they belong to one of the Mongoloid peoples of the Himalayas. Usually their features are quite distinctive, but even when this is not so their complexion differs not only in degree, but in kind. Even the fairest Indians have a swarthy tinge which is absent from the warm brown of the darkest Burman, and an admixture of Indian blood can be recognized at a glance. An admixture of Chinese blood usually shows itself only in a lighter complexion, if at all.

This difficulty of distinguishing Burmans from other peoples of Indo-China and Indonesia is not due to all these peoples being of a uniform type. There may be great differences between individuals, but the tendency for each community to develop a type of its own, which is so marked in India, is absent. Scientific measurements seem no better able to classify these people than are personal impressions. The cranial measurements taken by me and others of various communities in Burma showed great variety as between individuals of the same community, but no material difference between the mean of one community and the mean of another. This miscellaneous character is quite in keeping with what we know about them otherwise. They do not

tend generally to form castes or endogamous communities. On the contrary, they intermarry and mix freely and peacefully with each other, and, as we have seen, readily adopt one another's dress, customs, and language.

It is possible, however, to name certain general characteristics. Black hair, straight or slightly waved, is universal. The complexion varies from a warm to a very light brown, with sometimes a yellow but never a black tinge. The body is comparatively hairless; the limbs supple and muscular, with rounded outlines and an absence of bony protuberances, the nose in particular never being prominent; the stature rather small.

In the most recent English work on ethnology (*Races of Man*, 1924) Dr. Haddon classifies races first by hair (woolly, wavy, or straight), then by cephalic index (ratio of length of head to breadth), and then by other physical characteristics. He distinguishes two general types as inhabiting Tibet and the Himalayas, Farther India and Indo-China, south China, Japan, and the Indian Archipelago—most of the populations being a mixture of the two types. One is straight-haired and round-headed, with yellowish to coppery-brown skin and broad face; the other wavy-haired and long or medium-headed, with tawny, cinnamon, fawn, or rather light-brown skin and lozenge-shaped face. The former is found in its purest form in China, the latter in the Archipelago. In most of the countries mentioned, including Burma, the population is a mixture of the two types.[1]

So far as Burma is concerned, this classification is more satisfactory than that of Keane's *Man* (revised by Quiggin and Haddon, 1920), which groups the Burmese with the Chinese in one category (Southern Mongols) and the Malays and certain other inhabitants of the Archipelago in a different one (Oceanic Mongols). Burmese characteristics, both physical and mental, agree, where the two lists differ, with those given by him for the Oceanic Mongols. Thus their

[1] The hair of the inhabitants of Burma may seem straight to Europeans, especially when it is oiled; but if it is compared with that of the yellow and red peoples it will be seen that there is a tendency to waviness. All the photographs of Nagas in my possession show more or less wavy hair.

colour is more brown than yellow, their cheek-bones less prominent than among the "true Mongols," their eyes larger and horizontal, their stature smaller, and their lips thick rather than thin. In temperament they are excitable rather than sluggish, not remarkable for great endurance, easy-going rather than thrifty and industrious, and inclined to be daring and adventurous. This description applies to the Mons as well as to the Burmese proper. On every ground it seems clear that they should be placed, if Keane's classification is adopted at all, among the Oceanic Mongols. The fact that they speak a language belonging to a different family is nothing. There is evidence that languages of the Mon family were once widely spoken in the vast area which is now China, Chinese being confined to a small corner of it.[1] There is also good reason to believe that Tibeto-Burman languages were once spoken in that area much more widely than now. It may easily have happened that the speakers of Mon languages were affected in three different ways by the advance from the north of more vigorous races: that some of them retained their language and retired into the mountains, or into deltaic swamps, or crossed the sea to the islands; that others adopted Tibeto-Burman languages and eventually retreated into Burma before the advance of Chinese civilization; and that others again remained, and "became" Chinese.

No mention is made in any of the above books of a remarkable physical trait described in Baelz's *Zeitscript für Ethnologie*, translated as follows in the Indian Census Report, 1911, i. 386.

"Every Chinese, every Korean, Japanese, and Malay is born with a dark blue patch of irregular shape in the lower sacral region. . . . Children of mixed Japanese and European parentage who take after the European parent have not got these spots; those who share the peculiarities of both parents have traces of them; and those who take entirely after the Japanese parent show them very distinctly."

Probably every Burman baby is born with this blue

[1] Terrien de la Couperie, *The Languages of China before the Chinese* etc.

patch, which sometimes extends over the buttocks, so that one child I saw looked as if he had been sitting on wet paint. I am told that the outer skin is not pigmented, but that the colour shows through from an inner layer. The patch usually disappears before the end of the first year. According to the census report it is general also among the Mongolian races who live along the Himalayas, and well known among the Bengalis, who are classed as Mongolo-Dravidian. Farther south it tends to disappear as the admixture of Mongolian blood grows less. It has been observed, according to Deniker,[1] among the Eskimo and the Tagals of the Philippines. I have recently received credible information that it is common among the Samoans and the Maoris. If this information is correct it supplies an important connecting-link between Keane's Northern, Southern, and Oceanic Mongols and the Polynesians and Maoris whom he classifies as Caucasic, though their languages belong to the same family as those of the Mongols. Mr. Haddon regards the Polynesians (including the Maoris) as a mixture, like the Burmese, of the two types described above, but he places them in a separate group.

As might be expected from his racial history, the Burman is adaptable and easily civilized. One finds little in him of the conservatism of the east. He is quick to take up new ideas, and ready to learn from others. Though the earliest civilization of which we have any record in Burma is of Indian origin, and it is possible that without Indian or other help the race would not have advanced beyond a tribal organization, the Burman peasant has long lived in conditions far removed from the squalor and ignorance of his Indian brother. He is also more intelligent and resourceful. It may be true that he did not evolve a civilization of his own, but very few races have done so. Civilization came to him later than to his neighbours, that is all. If he made a better use of it, it must be counted in his favour.

He has been called by some a nature's gentleman, and by others a lazy rotter. The last term is applied to him by our

[1] *Races of Man*, 1900, p. 51.

captains of industry, who would like to employ him, but have usually to content themselves with the unpleasant Madrasi, at least for unskilled labour. It is quite true that the Burman, who has a higher standard of living and is generally able to maintain it, will not work for the same wage as the cooly imported from India, and expects shorter hours and more frequent holidays. He is also more restless and unstable. An Indian will work for long hours day after day at the same task, doing as little as he can but never demanding a holiday. If a Burman wants a holiday nothing will keep him at his job, and this unreliability is disconcerting to employers. His work done, an Indian sits still and does nothing; a Burman goes off to enjoy himself. Europeans accustomed to Indian servants often find Burmans impossible. One of them complained to me that his Burman servants always preferred doing other servants' jobs to their own. The waterman would want to cook, the cook to sew on his master's buttons, and so on. He was scandalized at such behaviour. The Indian servant has his own job, which he performs faithfully, and he will not lift a finger in any other. The Burman may be lazy, but he has a considerable reserve of energy which he can put forward when he thinks necessary. His vitality is greater than that of the Indian. One has only to see children at play to realize this. The Indian child is too often sad and listless; the Burman bubbles over with animal spirits. But laziness is not condemned among Burmans as it is with us. A Burman is not ashamed to admit that he is lazy. If you ask a Burman servant why he has not done something which he ought to have done, he will very likely say that he felt too lazy to do it.

Granted, then, that the Burman is lazy, his is a reasoning indolence. It is accompanied by a careless good-nature and open-handedness, an easy tolerance and a desire to keep on good terms with others, which make him habitually courteous and considerate. Perhaps it will be said that all this is merely the result of his indolent disposition; his kindness to his children, who to an outsider seem to do pretty well what they please, is what one might expect from a lazy man. But he is habitually kind to animals too, even

when this means exertion for himself. I remember starting on a long ride early one afternoon in the Păkôkku district, when the thermometer registered over a hundred in the shade. After some miles I overtook a middle-aged Burman, who, with sweat running down his face, was carrying a burden and leading a pony along the burning sandy road. The pony was saddled, and I asked the man why he was not riding. It was too hot, he explained, for the pony. No doubt most Burmans would have ridden, but I have never heard of a Burman being cruel to his beast. There used to be at Mandalay an Inspector of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. He told me that all his work was among Indians. Yet Mandalay, unlike Rangoon, was almost entirely a Burmese city.

The careless good-nature of which I have spoken, and still more an indifference to the value of money, are qualities more noticeable in the men than in the women. It is easy to see why. The women perform all the domestic duties as in other countries, and in Burma they also take more than the usual share of the money-getting. They acquire a sense of responsibility and something of the hardness which we are accustomed to look for in men. A writer on Burma has remarked on the beautiful character of the old men, which is reflected in their faces. They have had an easy time in the battle of life. The thin pursed lips of the grandams show where the brunt of it has fallen.

Though the Burman is naturally courteous, he has no artificial polish. His language is singularly deficient in polite phrases. There are hardly any forms of greeting, and none of farewell. Though, of course, it is possible to express thanks, the phrase corresponding to our "thank you" is seldom used. A Burman once explained to me that thanks are a cheap way of returning a benefit, and that a truly grateful person remains silent at the time and takes the first opportunity for action.

Many Englishmen who like the Burman would hesitate to place truthfulness and integrity among his virtues. But it is not reasonable to measure him by the standards of northern Europeans. I have found him a very poor liar.

I have had English soldiers before me who looked me frankly in the face and swore the most dreadful lies—they must have been lies, because another batch of soldiers swore exactly the opposite. The Indian skill in lying is well known; there are whole races that never commit themselves—at least in the witness-box—to a definite statement on any subject whatever, so that it is rarely possible to break them down in cross-examination. Burmans also lie in the witness-box, but their performances are beneath contempt. Their demeanour probably gives them away at the outset, and a few searching questions cause them to contradict themselves. It is only occasionally that one is puzzled to tell which side is speaking the truth.

Nor can general dishonesty fairly be inferred from official corruption. That is traditional, as I understand it is in China, where it is quite compatible with honesty among traders. Moreover corruption is not always most rife where it is most talked about. Nothing is a secret in Burma, and nothing is kept from the ears of Europeans. I believe there would be little bribe-taking among Burman judges if there were a real determination to put it down, and I think it is decreasing. A good test of general integrity is the progress of co-operation in agricultural banks. This progress is impossible where the people do not trust each other. In Upper Burma co-operation has been successful; in the lower province it has advanced more slowly.

The Burman's virtues are on the whole those of a primitive people which has had no continuous fight for its existence against either nature or man. His vices also are primitive. He is liable to sudden bursts of passion, in which he uses any weapon that comes to hand. More civilized people have learnt to control themselves, and to wrap even insults in polite language. That is not the Burman's way. His vocabulary of abuse is rich and varied, and he attaches what seems to us an absurd amount of importance to its use. Men imagine themselves disgraced, when certain expressions are hurled at them in the course of a quarrel, to such a degree that they can only regain their self-respect by shedding blood. It is not without reason that Burman magistrates

will always, if they are allowed, inflict severe sentences for abuse of a neighbour. But in this unpleasant accomplishment a man is no match for his gentler companion, perhaps because his ready recourse to lethal weapons allows him less practice. On the rare occasions when a Burmese woman takes leave of her modesty she does so in order, as she thinks, to punish someone with whom she has a quarrel. It is strange to see a woman, by no means a vixen in ordinary life, going out to do battle with another who has offended her. Standing in the middle of the street before her enemy's house, she will scream uncomplimentary epithets, which, being returned, are presently followed by obscene abuse. Sometimes the two proceed to blows. A slipper is the weapon used, for the object is to shame the enemy rather than to hurt her, and to touch her head with one's shoe is one of the greatest insults that can be conceived. Or they may try to disgrace each other (not, be it noted, themselves) in a still more characteristic way. As the frenzy of each combatant rises, she strips off her lower garment, slaps with her hand that which should be hidden, and hurls a rude invitation at her adversary. I have never witnessed such a scene, but I have found a European convulsed with laughter in the main street of a busy town, and he told me that the two respectable-looking Burmese ladies who were sitting in their shops a few feet away had, some moments before, been seen by him rolling naked in the gutter.

It is to the credit of the Burmese, and quite in consonance with their character, that I have never known them use poison. Several cases of poisoning have been before me. In one of these a Eurasian official had assaulted an Indian messenger for intruding into his bedroom. The man bribed the official's cook, also an Indian, with what seems the inadequate sum of five rupees to poison the whole family, and several of them died. In another a Siamese woman tried to get rid of her Chinese husband with croton-seeds, but found him too tough. Neither in these nor in any other case I have heard of was any Burman accused of poisoning.

Running amok, however, is possibly as common in Burma as in Malaya. Several times I have known a man seize a

*da*,[1] and attack not only some one against whom he had a grudge, but everyone who came in his way. On such occasions villagers usually show more discretion than valour, and not even the certainty of a Government fine on the village will induce them to do more than watch from safe hiding-places while the murderer walks away. Yet once, in a small delta town, a grey-haired Burmese woman seized round the waist a man who had already cut down two persons and was looking for his enemy, and held him till he was disarmed. And there have been many cases where villagers, armed only with their household weapons, have resisted dacoits provided with fire-arms, and thereby earned a reward from Government. I shall, therefore, not include cowardice among the Burman vices, though the Burmese are often accused of it. It is not reasonable to apply to them the rare standards of some fighting races.

It happens, however, that women have provided the most conspicuous examples of courage of which I can recall details. There is the mother who slew with a *da*[1] a tiger which had seized her infant son. There is the girl who was walking in Indian file with others in a forest, when a tiger sprang out of the undergrowth and carried off one of her companions. Snatching a *da* from the hand of her little brother, she followed the beast and killed him. She was dead when I visited the village some years later, but I heard the story, which has been told by Mr. David Wilson in his *Anecdotes of Big Cats*, from the lips of the woman who had been rescued. And there is the girl who, when her brother-in-law was shot dead at the entrance to his house by dacoits,[2] closed and barred the door, and coolly carried a sick man and an infant child into comparative safety at the back of the house, while bullets were flying through it.

Burmese children are among the most attractive in the world. Their soft bodies and rounded limbs delight the eye; their laughter is infectious; their overflowing spirits are irresistible. So found an Inspector of Schools who was examining a class of small children at a town in the delta.

[1] See p. 47.

[2] Robbers acting in gangs of five or more.

One mite peeped at him from behind her slate and hid her face with it alternately. That was all, but it set the class laughing. The Inspector, who was addressing them, did his best to look severe, but soon broke down and laughed with the rest. Their capacity for enjoyment is immense. When Lord Hardinge was Viceroy someone conceived the happy idea of having a Children's Day to celebrate his escape from death at the hand of an assassin. I arranged for the launches and small steamers in Bassein harbour to take two thousand children for a trip down the river. Never have I seen such manifestations of delight as when I visited them with the Port Officer on his launch, except once. That was in the Chindwin, when I promised some of the little girls in the photograph facing p. 124 a trip to Mandalay. Sitting in a row on the deck of my launch, they clapped their hands and shouted for joy, placed their foreheads three times on the deck, and then astonished me, as their four foreheads reached the deck together for the third time, by turning complete somersaults.

Burmese children learn to look after themselves very early. When calling at a house for a drink of coconut-water during a long march, I saw a naked infant hacking a hole with a heavy chopping-knife in a coconut held between his feet. It looked dangerous, but his parents were undisturbed. I have told in other chapters how children scampered over a lofty platform full of holes where I had to pick my way carefully, and how little girls of eight are placed in positions of responsibility. It is amusing to see a naked urchin of seven or so turn a herd of gigantic buffaloes, galloping in a wrong direction, by coolly throwing a stone at them, or guide the herd in the way they should go, stretched at full length on the back of the leader.

The Burmese are a laughter-loving people, and have both a ready wit and a sense of humour. Their language lends itself to witty retorts and pithy sayings. It has a rich store of proverbs. Many of these have their counterpart with us. Thus "One head can't carry two pots" suggests an attempt to ride two horses at once, and "Playing the harp to

a buffalo" the Biblical casting of pearls before swine. Leaving aside this class, we find many which I am unable to match in our language. "They admire each other like the vulture and the crow" is an apt description of what we sometimes call a "mutual admiration society." "If you don't believe me, ask my wife" is a sarcastic retort to someone who appeals to a not unprejudiced witness. "Cackling all day won't produce more than one egg" seems intended for a fussy woman. Contempt is expressed in "A farthing dip in a world aflame" and "A jumping flea raises no dust"; and helplessness amid danger in "A blade of grass under a buffalo-fight". "A centipede doesn't stop for a game leg" suggests a multiplicity of resources as well as a disregard for trifles. "Don't try to blow the fire with a hare-lip" is a way of saying that one should leave a job to someone better fitted for it. "Sound dog shouldn't fight mad" is always good advice. "An old bull likes young grass" and "A man from hell is not afraid of hot ashes" hardly need explanation. On the other hand, we have to guess the reason of the second piece of advice in "Don't help a sound man, or salve an official's boat". Perhaps the suggestion is that in either case one is less likely to get thanks than a rap over the knuckles. As we shall see in another chapter, the Burman has never loved his officials.

"To drink the bitter water" is a common expression, the meaning of which may be gathered from the following fable.

"A certain king had a minister so wise that he could foretell the future; and one day the minister warned the king that at a certain time there would be a fall of bitter rain-water, and that all who drank of the water would lose their reason. Which words the king bore in mind, but he told not his people. And the rain came, and all the people drank of the bitter water save the king and his minister, and all that drank went mad. Then the people gathered round the king and his minister, and mocked them, saying, 'Behold the madmen.' Whereat the king was angry, but the more he was angry, the more the people mocked them. Then the king took thought, and calling aside his minister said to him, 'Should not we also drink the bitter water?' And the

wise man made answer, 'It is well to do as others do'. And the king and his minister drank the bitter water, and became mad like the rest."

In contrast to the irony of the above fable, we have the primitive humour of the story[1] of the squirrel, the owl, and the mole. It tells why the squirrel clicks, and why the owl has large eyes and the mole small ones.

"The squirrel, the owl, and the mole had a cart, but no bullocks. So to the cart they yoked a pair of tigers, and in front of the tigers a pair of leopards, and in front of the leopards a pair of jackals, and in front of the jackals a pair of hares. The squirrel drove, and clicked to urge this queer team along; wherefore the squirrel says click, click, to this day. Behind the squirrel sat the owl; and he watched the rough ground as the cart went bumping over it, and his eyes grew bigger and bigger with fear. But the mole lay back in the cart behind the owl, and laughed, and laughed, and laughed till his eyes nearly disappeared into his head. And that is why the owl has large eyes and the mole small ones."

Burmese art is still alive, in spite of the western invasion. It has much deteriorated, however, and little of the best work remains, as the artists used perishable materials, or precious metals which were melted down with each change of fashion. Wood-carving, once bold and vigorous, has become, with improved implements, finicking and over-elaborated, though sometimes beautiful, as in the shrine on the Shwe Dăgon pagoda platform shown on p. 60 of *The Silken East*. The panel which faces this page is a good specimen of the earlier style. It is an accurate copy, made for me by a Burman carver over twenty years ago, of one found among the ruins of Amarapura (built in 1783 and abandoned forty years later) and now in the possession of Mr. Swinhoe, of Mandalay. It represents a hermit resting under a tree with his head on his knees. The three wooden figures below it were photographed by me at a shrine in

[1] The fable is told in different words by Professor Maung Tin in the Journal of the Burma Research Society for April, 1915, and the story by R. A. S. in the issue of June, 1912.

WOODEN PANEL REPRESENTING A HERMIT ASLEEP

THE OLD MAN, THE SICK MAN, AND THE RECLUSE

Lower Burma. In the legend of the Buddha it is told how the young prince, when arriving in his garden, saw on different days an aged man (left), a sick man (centre), a corpse, and a recluse (right). Such things as old age, sickness, and death had been kept from him lest they should interfere with his happiness; but he was set thinking, and decided to leave his wife and new-born child and the gay life of the palace, and to go out into the wilderness.

The face of Nawyăta's queen (p. 116) has so much character in it as to suggest that it may be a portrait. Archæology in Burma is not enough advanced for a date to be fixed. The present figure, kept in a little shrine by the river at Kyauksè, may have been preserved for centuries by repeated coats of gold-leaf, or it may be a copy of an earlier one which decayed.

That boldness and vigour of execution have not altogether disappeared from Burmese art is shown by the stucco-work on a temple at Mingin in the Upper Chindwin. Though exposed to the weather, it looked quite new when I saw and photographed it about 1909. There is life in the walking figure of the hermit which faces p. 44, and the leafy design by the side of the princess (p. 122) is admirable. The art of painting has not advanced so far, but there is a good deal of action in the picture of an abduction or elopement, a photograph of which is reproduced on p. 258 of *The Silken East*. The young couple are driving in a European trap. A Burman policeman has seized the pony's head, and holds up two fingers in reply to the groom, who is offering him a rupee, while the young man puts his hand over the girl's mouth to prevent her from screaming. The picture was part of the decorations of a car at the funeral of the last Thathănabaing (or Buddhist Pope) appointed by the King of Burma, and was being stoned by some policemen (who naturally regarded it as an affront to themselves) when I intervened and photographed it.

The use of beautiful things in everyday life, if it ever existed widely, has hardly survived the influx of machine-made goods. The wooden pulleys facing the next page were found by me in a remote jungle village, and such things are

rare. Lacquer boxes and trays, however, are still made in abundance with conventional patterns and figures, and silver betel-boxes, which often show good work, are used by those who can afford them. The demand for silver-work, however, probably now comes mostly from Europeans. The niello-work of Taungu district may perhaps survive if used, as it should be, for the handles of ceremonial swords presented by Government to headmen and others for good service. The story of Pauk Tyaw (p. 126) is illustrated on the blade of a sword in my possession, and makes a most effective design. The presentation swords often made, with silver handles so elaborately worked as to be useless, are in the worst style of degenerate Burmese art.

I have now described the principal communities in Burma except the Shans, the Chins, and the Kărens. Of the Shans I have no personal knowledge. They inhabit the mountains to the east of Burma proper, and are closely allied in race and language to the Siamese. In fact Siam and Shan are the same word. With the Chins, who dwell south of the Nagas in the mountain range which separates Burma from Arakan and Assam, my acquaintance is slight. One tribe of them is called by the Burmese Chinbôk, or Stinking Chins. I realized the appropriateness of the name when two of them were brought into my court for trial, and I had to send to my house for cigarettes. Their manners are unfit for publication. In another tribe the faces of the women are tattooed black, and shine like patent leather. My attempt to photograph some of the women was a failure, as the light falling on their faces made them look white. An interesting community, speaking what is said to be a dialect of Chin, is the Taungtha of Păkokku district. The name means hill-folk, but they inhabit the plain at the foot of the mountain range mentioned above. Their tradition is that they came from Pôppa, an isolated mountain far to the east. They profess Buddhism, and are almost as civilized as their Burmese neighbours, but the women have a distinctive dress,[1] and certain old customs survive. By one of

[1] This is clearly shown in a photograph taken by me and published on p. 35 of *The Silken East* over the title "From the Yawdwin."

PULLEYS FROM VILLAGE LOOMS, KĀTHA DISTRICT

these a day in the year is set apart during which all the conventions in the relations of the sexes, usually strict, are suspended. I knew nothing of this when, as a junior officer, I had my camp-bed put together for the night on a clean piece of ground outside their principal village during a festival. I was tired, and slept soundly, but at dawn I became conscious, in my half-sleep, of titterings and slight movements all round me. When at length I opened my eyes I saw that the level space on which my bed had been placed was dotted with couples lying under blankets. The tittering had come from them, and they seemed to be greatly amused at my astonishment.

The Kărens speak a language which is outside the Tibeto-Burman group, and is said to be cognate to Chinese and the Tai languages. They are scattered over Lower Burma, living usually in hilly or remote areas. They resist the general tendency to assimilation, and cling to their own language even when adopting Burmese dress and customs and the Buddhist religion. They can sometimes be recognized by their deep-set eyes, and sometimes by their serious or wistful expression. They are less intelligent and mercurial than the Burmese, and are somewhat looked down on by them. Those who retain Kăren customs are also less clean. I once arrived at a Kăren village in the depths of a delta forest. Seeing a very dirty boy of ten or so, I asked his father when he had last had a bath. The answer was: "When he fell into the mud". "When was that?" I inquired. The Kărens are a truthful people. The man thought a little, and then said: "When he was about four years old".

Christian missions have made no headway among the Burmese, but French Catholic priests and American Baptist missionaries have converted whole communities of Kărens to their religions, thus enabling them to stand up to the Burmese, whom they formerly dreaded. One comes across these communities in unexpected places. I found one on an island of the Mergui Archipelago, to which I had swum ashore from the Government launch. The Kăren pastor and his whole congregation came out to meet me, and conducted me to

their church and school. Outside these they lined up, the girls, clean and neatly dressed, in front of the rest; and I was asked to sit on a chair facing them while they sang hymns. It was only when they began the National Anthem, and I felt it my duty to stand to attention, that I fully realized the absurd incongruity with the proceedings of my wet bathing-costume.

A HERMIT

(IN STUCCO ON WALL OF TEMPLE AT MINGIN)

## CHAPTER III

# DOMESTIC LIFE

A BURMAN villager has few wants. In most parts of the country he can build his house from bamboos and thatch, and perhaps a few posts, from the nearest jungle. Here also he finds the little fuel that he needs for cooking. Cheap clothing is sent to him from Manchester; but little is necessary, and for his younger children none at all. His food, consisting mainly of rice, fish, and vegetables, is produced almost at his door. His religion forbids him to drink, and his tobacco, his one luxury, costs very little. For travelling he harnesses his plough-bullocks to a primitive cart, or uses a boat fashioned by him from a tree, or goes on his own sturdy legs. A mat and coverlet are his bedding, and nothing else is really necessary except pots for cooking and storage of water. A warm climate, abundance of land, and simple habits enable him to make himself happy on an income which to an Englishman would mean misery and starvation.

What that income is it would be hard to determine, nor would a money figure convey much to a reader in England. A boatman or blacksmith in a remote part of the country may be far better off on half the money income than a labourer near Rangoon; not only because the necessaries of life are cheaper, but because he would have little to spend his money on; so that he may actually have a surplus to give away in charity, while the other has to go without many things which his friends and relatives enjoy, and may even have insufficient food. The same may be true of European countries, though to a much less degree because of the greater facilities for transport. But there are other

facts, too, which have to be considered—the difference in climate and in the habits of the people. The climate in Burma makes it generally unnecessary to have solid houses, or warm clothing, or covering for the feet, or fires for warmth. The habits of the people make chairs and tables and bedsteads unnecessary, and also meat and other expensive food. To be without these things may seem to some people poverty of the direst kind. But I have stayed in excellent hotels in Japan, hotels intended for the wealthy at pleasure resorts, where there were no chairs or tables or bedsteads, though some of them had electric light and telephones; and in Japanese country inns I have endured far less discomfort than in hostelries of the same class in the south of Europe. Yet another consideration is the family income. A Burmese wife has little housework, and can devote herself to trade or other occupations; while children become earners at an earlier age than in England.

All this has to be remembered in comparing the money wages of unskilled labourers. These are probably twice as high in Burma as in India, but only one-fourth of the wages of an agricultural labourer in England. Real wages cannot be compared, because the needs are not the same. The disparity of prices between England and Burma is less than between the various parts of Burma. Thus in 1924 rice in Rangoon was 3d. a pound, beef 10d., mutton 1s. 2d., potatoes 1½d., crystallized sugar 5½d., milk 7d. a quart, eggs 1s. 8d. a dozen; and the meat was poor, the milk thin, and the eggs very small. In some parts of Burma rice could probably have been obtained at ½d. a pound.

Between England and Burma the difference is mainly in the climate and the habits of the people. Between Burma and India the contrast strikes me as being of another kind. It is the difference between simplicity and squalor. The Indian hut, with its floor of bare earth and its walls of mud, is a familiar sight in Burma, but it is inhabited only by Indians. Even the poorest Burman house has at least a floor raised above the ground on posts.

I will now try to describe in greater detail the needs of an ordinary Burman villager.

Only the poorest have bamboo houses. Those who are better off, including the ordinary farmer or trader, use plank flooring with wooden walls. In the villages there is usually no front wall, though there may be some small sleeping-rooms at the back of the house. The family thus lives in the open air, exposed to view from the village street; which is good for both their health and their manners. In place of chairs and tables there are mats. A Burman is far more comfortable sitting on the floor than on a chair. A fine mat, woven from reeds cut into strips, serves for a bed, with a cotton coverlet for warmth. Nothing else is really needed save cooking-pots and a dish or two, a jar for storing water and a dipper, and the *da*, or household knife, a heavy implement some two feet long which will cut down a tree or sharpen a pencil. All these things may be products of village industries. But many cheap articles of European manufacture, especially crockery, glass, and hardware, can be bought in the market town and find their way to the villages, where they are put to various uses. These uses, by the way, are not always the same as in Europe. Some thirty years ago a party of high officials, including two heads of departments, arrived at a village, tired and hungry, far ahead of the carts which carried their dinner. The headman of the place, a well-to-do Burman, rose to the occasion, and provided them with a dinner which was quite in the European style. except that the vessel in which the soup was served was of a kind which we are accustomed to see only in the bedroom.

The bath is taken daily in the river if there is one. Most Burmans, both men and women, who live near a river are good swimmers. If there is no river, the bathers stand on the platform of a well, and empty the bucket over themselves. Water for the house is fetched at the same time. and thus the bathing-place becomes the social centre of every village. Wells set apart for drinking-water are never used for bathing. There is sometimes friction between Burmans and Indians on this point, Indians finding it difficult to understand why the same water should not serve for

both purposes. When I was at Akyab something like a riot resulted from an Indian rinsing out his mouth into a drinking-well.

Travelling costs little, even if a whole family moves with all its possessions. Carts are a village industry. They are built to go over the roughest ground, and if they break down in the forest can be repaired on the spot. There are no inns, but the people are hospitable, and in most villages some pious Buddhist has erected a shelter for wayfarers. Steamers and railway trains, where they exist, are popular and usually crowded, for the fares are low. Travellers take their bedding and food with them, and can make themselves comfortable anywhere.

Clothing has changed a great deal in the last few generations. The changes are a natural development, showing no influence of western fashions and tending to simplicity and convenience while displaying the slender erect figure which the Burman admires. The cumbrous *păso* of the men is passing away, and also the exiguous *tămein* of the women, open at the sides and compelling them to take ridiculously short steps or to expose the thigh in walking. Both have given place, nearly everywhere, to the *lôndyi*, a simple length of cotton or silk sewn together at the ends so as to form a cylinder, the upper part of which is wrapped tightly round the hips and tucked in at the waist. Above this is a loose white jacket with wide sleeves, barely reaching the hips and falling well outside them. The dress of the sexes is thus assimilated, so that to the casual European eye there is now no distinction, save that the gay silk kerchief, which the man twirls coquettishly round his head, is worn by the woman over her shoulders. Actually there is a slight difference in the cut of the jacket; and the *lôndyi* is worn rather longer by the women than by the men, and is tucked in at the waist in a different way. The younger women also wear, inside the jacket, a tight bodice, or cover the breasts by tucking the upper edge of the *lôndyi* over them instead of round the waist. Worn in this way without a jacket, the *lôndyi* serves them for working-dress, nightdress, or bathing costume. The men, on occasions requiring great activity, gather up

the lower part of the *lôndyi* and tuck it in at the waist, leaving the thighs bare.

Both sexes wear this convenient garment day and night, even when bathing, without intermission from the age of puberty till death. It is changed by slipping a fresh *lôndyi* over the one in wear, which is then undone and allowed to fall. Even when changing his clothes at night in a closed room, a Burman never strips himself naked. To do so would offend the spirits, six good and six evil,[1] who always watch over him. The superstition is, of course, not confined to Burma or eastern countries. It is common, for instance, in southern Europe.

The cotton *lôndyi* is probably from Manchester, and the silk kerchief from Europe or Japan; but the silk *lôndyi*, which the well-to-do wear always, and the poor on festive occasions, is still, or was a few years ago, woven in native handlooms. It lasts much better than European or Japanese silk, though not so long as the old heavy silken fabric, now quite gone out of fashion, of many colours and complicated pattern, which was passed as an heirloom from one generation to another. I bought from my servant a *păso*, now in the Liverpool museum, which had belonged to his grandfather and father before him. Though washed many times, it still shows little sign of wear.

Nothing is worn on the feet but loose slippers. These are not used in the house, where they would be an offence; nor on long walks, for which bare feet are found more convenient.

The silk kerchief is worn on all occasions by even the poorest of the men. It is wound round their long hair, which is gathered in a knot on the top of the head. The old men discard it, or substitute a white cotton fillet. The women wear nothing on the head, unless it be a flower or two stuck in their glossy hair, which is gathered on the top as in the photograph facing p. 60. Of this they take great care,

[1] King Thibaw's bed is said to have been surrounded by twelve golden images of the spirits which watched over him. One of them has come into my possession, and is now placed with the Burmese regalia at the Victoria and Albert Museum.

cleansing it with tamarind-juice and anointing it with the oil of the coconut. It is usually abundant; when nature is niggardly, it is supplemented by false tails, cut off from other heads.

The main food of the people is rice, eaten with the fingers twice a day. A Burman will talk of having eaten his rice where we should say we have had our dinner. Dried fish, vegetables, and condiments are usually added. Meat, eggs, and dairy products are absent from the ordinary village dietary. The Buddhist religion forbids the slaughter of animals, and even the killing of the germ in the egg. Those who can afford meat often overcome their scruples, but for milk and all its products (except condensed milk in tins) Burmans seem to have a natural distaste. Fruit and coconuts are plentiful, and an important part of the diet. Fresh coconut-water is the best thirst-quencher I know.

The smoking habit is general with both sexes. Even children take to it, and one of my memories is of a naked pot-bellied urchin of five or so standing at a door in the street of a town, his legs wide apart and his hands behind his back, puffing at a bulldog pipe. A visitor is always offered a smoke and a chew of betel, and it is considered polite to light the cheroot in one's mouth before passing it to one's guest. Tobacco is cheap. Good Burma cheroots, such as Englishmen smoke, used to be obtainable at two or three a penny, and a larger kind, mostly made of chopped tobacco-stalk covered with maize-leaf, was cheaper still.

Nearly every village supports at least one monastery, the monks undertaking in return the education of the village boys. It is usually the more prosperous members of the community who feed and clothe the monks, the poorest contributing only the spoonful of rice and curry given to them on their morning rounds.

If there is sickness in the family there may be small fees to pay to the village doctor, who practises a primitive system of medicine. But nearly all towns in Burma, and not a few villages which are the headquarters of Burman magistrates, have a government or municipal hospital, where free treatment is given to all comers by Indians or Burmans

MA KIN ME AND MA YIN ME OF BASSEIN, IN DANCING DRESS

trained in European medicine and surgery, assisted in the towns by trained Burmese nurses. At places of importance there is a European civil surgeon.

Amusements play a very important part in Burmese life, and cost the poor little or nothing. During the rainless months from December to April there is always something going on if one chooses to look for it. Every pagoda has its annual festival and fair lasting several days. Booths are erected on an open plain, and here a lively trade is done in most things which are on sale in the ordinary markets. There may be cart-races, pony-races, and boat-races, boxing and wrestling, games of skill and chance, dances and plays. The dancers are sometimes professionals, but more often village girls dressed in the traditional costumes. The regular plays, acted in the open air or in buildings erected for the purpose, begin at night and last till dawn; but extracts are performed in the day, sometimes by children. And all the while there is amusement to be obtained from strolling between the long lines of booths and shelters containing family parties, and watching the crowd in their gay silks, and meeting acquaintances from other villages; for all the country-side gathers together on these occasions, especially the young people, and there is much love-making. Food is carried from home, or bought at the fair, and if it is necessary to stay the night a temporary shelter of bamboos and leaves is easily constructed. Worship at the pagoda goes on all the time, and thus the visitor combines religion and amusement and, if he is a stall-holder, business also.

I have said enough, perhaps, to show how a Burman of the poorest class is able to live on very little. But the simple life I have described is not confined to the poorest class. It was common to all classes until the last few years. A Burman spent his wealth, not by adopting a more expensive style of living, but by building pagodas and monasteries, schools and bridges, wells and rest-houses, and by feasting his neighbours or engaging theatrical troupes to entertain them. Even now the changes are not great. Chairs and tables, however, on the European model are becoming common in the towns, and there are some modifications in

dress. Men and boys are beginning to wear European shoes and socks. I must add sock-suspenders, for these, in various bright but unpleasant colours, are a conspicuous article of dress on the bare legs of the modern schoolboy. On the other hand, he cuts his hair short and dispenses with the silk kerchief; a change which is economical and hygienic, but saddening to those who love the colours of a Burmese crowd. And every day new ways of spending money are being discovered. At the house of a cultivator on an island of the Mergui Archipelago, surrounded with swamps and many miles by boat from the nearest road, I found two new bicycles, already beginning to rust. An indulgent father had bought them for his boys. Burmans in the towns, of course, have learnt a better use of their money, but still buy such things as gramophones out of incomes on which an English family could hardly exist.

The towns in Burma, outside Rangoon, have few shops where goods are sold. Most of the business is done in the public market in the centre of the town. Here is to be bought every kind of thing that the town yields, and here the Burmese maiden is in her element. Never was there a better invention for combining business with pleasure: the business of money-making and the business of love, the pleasures of admiring and being admired. The market is a marriage mart, and a school for manners; an effective advertisement, and an unequalled convenience to the buyer. It is not surprising that many families which could well afford to do without this source of profit have a stall in the bazaar. How dull the girls would be without it!

From an early age the girls are taught how to compete with the Indian and Chinese traders who penetrate to all the towns; and in spite of their scanty education their capacity for mental arithmetic must be considerable. I have seen a little girl, who could not have been more than eight years old, sitting by herself at a stall on which some twenty kinds of goods were displayed. She had to remember the price of each one, and to calculate the amounts due in payment without any assistance from her elders. The photograph shows a somewhat older child presiding over a stall

IN CHARGE

for the sale of lacquered goods and looking after her little brother at the same time.

Every writer on Burma has commented on the remarkable degree of independence attained by the women. Their position is the more surprising in view of the subjection and seclusion of wives and daughters in the neighbouring countries of India and China; and of the doctrines of Buddhism, which are not more favourable to women than are those of other religions. Buddhism teaches that every man is a potential Buddha, but that a woman, though she may attain Nirvana in the next existence, cannot become a Buddha without first existing on earth as a man. In everyday life, too, she is in some respects made to feel her inferiority. She ought not to walk about upstairs when there is a man below, though this rule is frequently neglected. She may not bathe in water from the same jar as her lord. At public feasts the women must wait till the men have eaten, though in the same house the members of the family eat together. No Burman will touch with his hands a woman's lower garment, unless it is his mother's or grandmother's, when it has once been worn. All these rules are no doubt connected with a *tabu* common in primitive communities. But a certain amount of outward submissiveness is expected in a wife; and, above all, the fact that a man has taken a second wife does not in itself give his first wife a legal right to divorce him, though polygamy is not looked upon with favour, and it is not many men who succeed in keeping two wives in one house.

On the other hand women and girls, married or unmarried, move about in public as freely as men. They go unattended, from a very early age, to the market, the bathing-place, or the pagoda. The marriageable girls, especially if they be good-looking, have to undergo a constant fire of chaff from the young men, and become skilled in repartee. Courtship, unknown in most eastern countries, is often prolonged and unfettered, and sharpens the girl's wits while teaching her to defend herself against the wiles of man, which she can usually do very well. The girl commonly chooses her own husband, and in spite of the fact

that she does not always give way to him they mostly get on very well together. If they do not, they have only to go before the elders and agree to a divorce.

Not only do sons and daughters inherit equally [1] from their parents, who have no power under Buddhist law to make wills, but a married woman has a right to dispose as she pleases of property acquired by her before marriage, or inherited at any time. She may be cast off for adultery, but otherwise has the same right of divorce as her husband, and usually takes half the joint property. In Arakan, indeed, a wife may turn her husband out of doors on paying him a fixed sum (I think thirty-two rupees) if he neglects to work for the support of the family, and this act has all the effect of a formal divorce. The custom came to my notice in a case where the husband, thus ignominiously dismissed, had returned a month later and murdered his late consort.

In writing to a Burman it is common to add his wife's name on the cover, and it does not much matter whether the husband's name or the wife's comes first. The wife is usually a partner in her husband's business, and as such has as much right to sign for the firm as he; but she may have a business of her own over which he has no control. Even in matters in which she has no part, she is usually consulted before an important step is taken. Husband and wife often interchange duties. I have seen a young wife mending the roof of a house while her husband minded the baby on the ground below; each, I suppose, having a change and rest. When a village headman dies it is not uncommon for his widow to take command of the village until a successor is appointed.

For this exceptional position of women in Burma various reasons have been suggested, from matriarchy in the early history of the race to the invincible laziness of Burmese

[1] I admit that no authority can be found for this statement in the various Indian codes of Buddhist law which Burmese Buddhists hold in veneration and profess to follow. They contain elaborate and hopelessly conflicting rules of inheritance giving the largest share to the eldest son. But in practice I understand that these rules are disregarded by the people, and are not now enforced by the courts.

husbands. The last may be dismissed at once. There are communities where the men do no work whatever, yet treat their women as slaves. Nor is the matriarchate an explanation, for the matriarchate itself has to be explained. One can only suggest that the race breeds men who lack the desire for domination, or that some races have less differentiation of sex than others. The extreme result of these racial characteristics is in favourable circumstances the matriarchate.

The matriarchate is found in its purest form among the Khasis, whose country is better known as containing Cherrapunji, the rainiest spot in the world, and Shillong, the hill-capital of Assam. The Khasis speak a language of a different family from the Burmese, but allied to that of the Mons (p. 19), who, in spite of linguistic differences, nearly resemble the Burmese in customs, racial characteristics, and physical appearance. From Colonel Gurdon's book, *The Khasis*, I gather the following facts.

Ancestral property passes only through the women. When a woman dies, her property is divided among her daughters, the youngest getting the largest share. If there are no daughters, it goes to her sister's daughters, and, failing them, to her mother's sisters and their daughters, and so on. A man's acquired property goes on his death to his mother or his wife, but if he leaves no wife or daughters his sons are permitted to inherit property acquired during his marriage.

The chiefs are usually men, but the succession is in the female line. On a chief's death it passes, not to his son, but to the eldest son of the eldest uterine sister. If his sisters have no sons, it apparently goes to their daughters' sons, or, failing them, to his mother's sister's son, and so on. In one State the temporal power rests with the high-priestess, but is usually delegated by her to her son, nephew, or other male relative. She is succeeded by her daughter, daughter's daughter, sister, or mother's sister's daughter, and so on.

A married man usually lives in his mother-in-law's house until there are children, but in some parts he is only allowed

to visit his wife there after dark, and may not partake of any refreshment in the house because none of his earnings go to support the family. In any case, he remains subordinate to his wife's maternal uncle. He is lost to his family and clan when he marries.

Divorce is usually by mutual consent. If only one party wants the divorce, the other must be compensated. The children always remain with the mother.

If there were polyandry, or even sexual promiscuity, it would be easier to explain some of these customs. But Colonel Gurdon says "there is no evidence that polyandry ever existed among the Khasis. Unlike the Tibetans, the Khasi women seem to have contented themselves always with one husband, at any rate with one at a time." Unfortunately he says nothing about conjugal fidelity. A woman may habitually entertain lovers without going so far as to take a second husband.

I have described thus fully the laws of inheritance and succession among the Khasis because Mr. J. S. Furnivall [1] has shown that there are survivals of matriarchy among the Burmese.

"The most remarkable feature of the Khasi marriage," says Colonel Gurdon, "is that it is usual for the husband to live with his wife in his mother-in-law's house, and not for him to take his bride home, as is the case in other communities. This arrangement amongst the Khasis is no doubt due to the prevalence of the matriarchate." This custom was also a feature of Burmese marriages, according to Sir George Scott, when he wrote *The Burman* in 1882; and it was still the ordinary practice among the Burmese of the Chindwin when I was there some fifteen years ago. The young man would often leave his village and his kindred to work for his wife's parents, as Jacob worked for his father-in-law. Mr. Furnivall adds, again quoting Sir George Scott, that if the girl was an only daughter the couple remained

[1] In a remarkable article entitled "Matriarchal Vestiges in Burma," published in the first number (1911) of the Journal of the Burma Research Society and supplemented by notes in the issue for December, 1912.

in the house till the death of the old people, when in the ordinary course of things they inherited the property.

I have often found a headman's widow carrying on his work pending the appointment of a successor. Mr. Furnivall refers to Burmese records of the eighteenth century showing that there were then female headmen whose mothers, grandmothers, and great-grandmothers were headmen before them. I might add that villagers in the Chindwin, when asked the names of the sons of a deceased headman with a view to the post being filled, habitually gave the names of sons-in-law, as if they were entitled to succeed through their wives.

Mr. Furnivall points out numerous cases in the history of the Burmese kingship where aspirants to the throne married the late king's consort to strengthen their claim. The twin founders of Pegu, according to Mon tradition, married the same woman in succession. So did the brothers who founded Tăgaung in Burmese legend, and the twin founders of Prome in Burmese or Pyu tradition. The most remarkable instance, however, was that of Saw On Me in the fourteenth century. She was married in succession by three rulers of Pinya, brothers; then by Thădominbya, who murdered the last of them and became king of Pinya and Ava; then by an officer who was sent by Thădominbya when on his death-bed to kill her, lest she should pass to someone else; and lastly by another successful claimant to the throne. A parallel is cited among the Mons.

Mr. Furnivall finds further evidence in the custom, followed by King Thibaw, by which the kings of Burma married at least one of their half-sisters. He points out that this was not done, as suggested by Sir George Scott, to ensure the purity of the royal blood, for the issue of such unions was not necessarily heir to the throne. Perhaps (though this is not stated) the half-sister's mother was of better descent than the mother of the king. In that case the marriage would strengthen the king's position, as the claim of Saw On Me's successive husbands was strengthened.

When attending the festival of The Brothers at Taungbyôn (p. 113) I found that the high-priestess of the

cult claimed to be a direct descendant in the female line from a Chinese princess. Further inquiry may show an even closer connection between the Khasi law of inheritance and that of the officials of this ancient cult.

Lastly, I think there is some linguistic evidence. The Burmese word *u* means primarily the head and front, the most important part, of anything; and secondly, a maternal uncle.[1] We use a similar metaphor in our expression "head of the family." The corresponding words for paternal uncle are based on that for father, and do not contain the root *u*. This suggests that the maternal uncle was formerly regarded as the head of the family, as among the Khasis.

Thus there is considerable evidence, as Mr. Furnivall says, that both the Burmans and the Mons were at one time organized on matriarchal lines. The very conflict between the Buddhist theory of the inferiority of women and the Burmese practice supports him. The theory evidently comes from India, with the Indian code of Buddhist law. The practice is the Burman's own. We have already seen a similar conflict of theory and practice in the law of inheritance.

The conformity of Burmese customs in certain respects to the ideals of our most advanced civilizations must not blind us to the fact that the Burmese are a people in whom primitive passions are easily aroused; and we cannot expect them to have even begun to acquire those habits of unembarrassed comradeship between the sexes which are only now being formed in northern Europe and America, and so far as I know nowhere else. It follows from this that a very strict code of outward propriety is necessary. For a man to touch a girl's hand in public is a gross insult, even if he be her lover. A good-natured Scotch captain of a

[1] Stevenson's dictionary gives three words *u*, one a prefix to names meaning uncle and derived from *uyi*, which is one of the words for maternal uncle, and the other two meaning "to begin" and "beginning, fore-end, forepart, front, top," etc. But it is much more likely that the first word is the same as the last in a secondary use. A father's sister is *ăyi*. A mother's elder brother is *u-dyi* (big *u*), and a mother's younger brother *u-le* (little *u*). Clearly *u* is not derived from *uyi*, but *uyi* is composed of the roots *u* and *yi*.

river steamer, ignorant of Burmese custom, who patted a young Burmese girl on the head, was considerably taken aback by the storm of indignation which his act aroused among her fellow-passengers, and begged me to tell him what he had done wrong. Burmese magistrates inflict very severe sentences for what appear to us trivial offences under the section of the Penal Code which deals with outrages on the modesty of women. A young man at Mandalay was sentenced to six months' imprisonment for upsetting a girl backwards while they were sitting in a merry group round a fire. He did not appeal against the sentence, but I sent the record to the Judicial Commissioner, who reduced the punishment and suggested that Burmese girls should wear clothing which would make such incidents less embarrassing to them. An equally severe sentence was passed on a lad who, having been permitted to escort a damsel to her home, kissed her cheek—or rather sniffed it, for sniffing is the Burmese method of expressing affection. I am not sure that both these sentences would not have been endorsed by Burmese public opinion. Still more unreasonable was a sentence, which I set aside on appeal, of three months' imprisonment on an old man who had caught his servant-girl eavesdropping when he was talking secrets with his wife. His offence consisted in seizing her by the wrist and pulling her into his wife's presence.

When a young man wishes to marry the girl of his choice he usually sends someone on his behalf to demand her from her parents; and his parents and hers meet together and invite a few friends, whom they regale, if they follow the old custom, with pickled tea. If they can afford to pay a company of actors, and give an open-air play at night in front of the bride's house, so much the better. But a legal marriage can be effected by the couple sleeping and eating together, without any ceremony. Clandestine intercourse may gradually develop into marriage. If pregnancy results before it has done so, and the lover proves faithless, the girl is regarded as one whose husband has deserted her. The matter is not complicated by a difference in name as with us, since women do not change their name on marriage.

In a case which came before me on appeal a man sued for restitution of conjugal rights a girl who admitted intercourse but denied marriage. Though only clandestine intercourse was proved, the Burmese judge granted a decree. This was set aside by me on the ground that there was no marriage, as the couple had not habitually slept and eaten together.

Adultery is a criminal offence in Burma. It is anomalous that this should be so in a country where the wife is on the whole regarded as a free agent, as with us; but, while the customary law of the people is followed in civil suits relating to marriage and divorce, the criminal law is the Indian Penal Code, which was framed for a society where the woman is often kept in confinement and regarded as little more than the property of her husband; and under s. 497 of the Code a husband can prosecute anyone who commits adultery with his wife. But though I have known many such prosecutions in Burma, I have never known one in which the wife was Burmese; nor, indeed, have I ever heard of adultery in a woman of Burmese stock on both sides. There are no statistics of divorce, but I do not think divorces are particularly common, in spite of the fact that the parties have only to go before the elders of the village and declare their wish to separate.

If a marriage is performed without much ceremony, and with no procession through the streets, it is not because the Burman does not love ceremonies and processions. At every pagoda-festival processions are arranged, usually with music. The entry of a boy into monastic life is the occasion of an elaborate ceremony, preceded by a procession in state round the town. Nor is there any less ostentation at funerals than in other countries; but the processions are picturesque, bright with colour, and enlivened with music and sometimes dancing.

The Burman believes that the spirit of a dead man remains in the house for seven days after death, and is cognizant of all that goes on there. His bed is arranged as usual, and a fresh supply of food and water is placed by it every morning and evening. During the same period

GIRLS WAITING TO JOIN IN PROCESSION AT INITIATION CEREMONY, KINDAT, UPPER CHINDWIN

LIBRARY
OF T
SOME

hospitality is offered to all who come, and monks are invited to preach as well as to eat. At the end of the seven days the spirit departs. According to some it is ejected by the house-god, Min Magăyi, the mighty blacksmith who was burnt alive by a king of Tăgaung, and whose spirit watches over every Burman household. But it is not confined to the house during these seven days. It may wander here and there, visiting the places it was wont to visit in life. This belief brought me an uncanny experience when I was Deputy Commissioner of Pyapon in 1907.

The Civil Surgeon of Pyapon, a native of Arakan, had died. The day after his death a messenger came to me from his widow and asked me whether I would sign an order discharging the dead officer from Government service. The reason given was that his ghost had been walking about the hospital and disturbing the patients. Until he was removed, or allowed to resign, he was still under the orders of his superior officers, and considered it his duty to go on with his work. I objected that I had no power to remove a civil surgeon, but was told that my order would be quite effective for the purpose. Of course I consented; but I was startled a little later when an official letter was placed before me for signature, addressed to the dead man and informing him that he was removed from Government service with effect from a date and hour mentioned, these being the date and hour on which he died. I signed the letter, and was told afterwards that the visits had ceased.

In Lower Burma, when the master of a house dies, all the pots in the place are broken, and water is sprinkled on the spot where the body lay and along the path in front of the house over which it was carried. Water frequently takes the place of blood in Burmese ceremonies, and the origin of these rites may possibly be a practice of killing slaves on the death of their master.

I will end this chapter with an account given to me by my servant Maung San Dun of an attempt to save the life of a boy when the usual remedies had been tried without success. Two relatives, his brothers by marriage, were taken ill at the same time. The elder died, and the same

night his mother dreamt that she saw him leaving the house with the younger on his back. It was decided that no ordinary treatment could save the child from following his brother out of the world, and that an attempt must be made to cheat the King of Death. The boy's body was carefully measured, and a bamboo cut to its exact length. His hair, finger-nails, and toe-nails were cut, and the pieces placed in the bamboo; which was then dressed in his clothing and lifted by two persons, one taking each end, into a coffin. All this time there were manifestations of grief, silent lest the boy should hear, and whisperings that he was dead. The coffin was then nailed down and carried to the cemetery, followed by a procession of mourners, who announced the death of the child to the neighbours. Passers-by who were not in the secret took the funeral for a real one. At the cemetery a monk preached the usual sermon, and recited texts while a layman let water fall in drops from a cup. Those present were called upon for the usual cheers, and the coffin was lowered into a grave and covered over with earth. All this was of no avail. When the mourners reached home the child was dead.

## CHAPTER IV

# COMMUNAL LIFE

I HAVE shown in Chapter II that the independent Nagas of the north-west of Burma are closely allied to the Burmese in language and race. These people owe no allegiance to anyone but their village chiefs, who are elected by the villagers, and have to share their power with a village council. Villages often raid and fight with each other, and sometimes a chief succeeds in levying tribute on another village; but he never attempts to administer it, and the payment of tribute does not last long. Certain groups of Nagas may be distinguished from other groups by differences in custom, such as the fashion of wearing the hair, and by their dialect; but, though such groups may be called tribes, there is nothing among them of the nature of a tribal organization. The organization remains that of the village.

There is no reason to doubt that a similar organization existed among the Burmese when they were in a primitive state, for it exists still. It was the real unit of administration under the Burmese king, and it continued to be so under the bureaucracy, mainly Burmese, established by the British Government. In outlying parts of Upper Burma, before the British annexation of forty years ago, much the same political conditions existed as among the Nagas, except that each village had to pay an annual tribute to a distant military governor and to furnish its quota of men in time of war. The tribute was fixed in proportion to the size of the village, and within each village the burden was distributed among individuals, according to their ability to pay, by a committee of the villagers themselves. Culti-

vators were further called upon to give up a tenth of their produce. In case of war the village was required to provide, according to its size, a certain number of men fully provided with necessaries for a campaign. The men were selected by arrangement among the villagers, and those who stayed at home compensated those who went to the front. The headman retained a fixed proportion of the tribute, or revenue, collected by him when paying it to the central government. Sometimes villages were grouped under an overlord, or superior headman, who received a varying proportion of this commission; but these superior headmen were irregular and accidental features of the system. Succession to the headmanship and boundaries of village lands were often disputed by force of arms, and killing in such conflicts was not regarded as murder. Burning and pillaging were ordinary accompaniments of these little wars, and no official of the Government thought of interfering unless his own authority was flouted. This state of things produced strong headmen, without giving them unlimited power over the people. An unpopular headman was either deposed or deserted by his villagers; a popular one attracted new settlers and so augmented his income.

We have no evidence that the Burmese, or the various communities which were destined to adopt the Burmese language and customs, ever evolved of themselves a more centralized organization than that of the Nagas; though it is likely enough that they formed federations of villages under overlords for military purposes. Nor does Chinese civilization seem to have helped them, probably because it was then too distant. Though the Chinese, both as individuals and as a nation, have always been looked up to in Burma, they seem to have had curiously little influence on Burmese history. The civilization—hardly extending, perhaps, beyond the court—of the earliest kingdoms in Burma of which we have any record, was Indian; the kings, whatever their race may have been, affected Indian names; Indian architects and craftsmen were imported; Indian alphabets were used for such languages as were reduced to writing; and Buddhism, an Indian religion, spread over

the country. There is no reason to assume that this partial Indianization was the result of conquest. Indian adventurers may, by reason of their superior knowledge, have acquired power, or native chiefs may have established their supremacy over others, and taken Indian names, under Indian advice. In India a class with power, wealth, and leisure had grown up which was able to improve its own condition, however degraded that of the rest of the people may have been, and so to advance in the civilizing arts, including the art of government. Thus little kingdoms were formed—Burmese, Kadu, Pyu, Mon, and Arakanese—all under Indian influence. But it cannot be said that these exotic governments were a success, whether the rulers were foreigners or of the same race as the ruled. The only stable part of them was the village system, which had its roots in the customs of the people. Between that and the king there were no feudal lords, and no assemblies of headmen—no one to check the king's power and ambition, or give stability to the government. All the officials were appointed by the king, whose watchword, as we should say nowadays, was economy. That is, he gave them no salaries, but left them to make what they could out of the people. They were appropriately named "burdens" and "eaters", according to their rank. The "eating" was made easy for a cruel and grasping man (and no one else would take such appointments) by the Burman's tolerant nature and extreme individualism, which prevented him from combining to resist oppression. Now and then, however, there was a rebellion, which either substituted a new tyrant for the old one or was suppressed with massacre and torture. The unchecked ambitions of the rulers led them into foreign wars which, whether successful or not, only added to the misery of the people. The local officials, far from suppressing crime, battened upon it. "Under the Burmese rule," says the Administration Report for the third year after the annexation of Pegu, "the subordinate officers of the interior generally, and even the governors of districts themselves frequently, were in league with robbers; they afforded them protection, retained them as bravos, and

received a share of the plunder. Numerous criminal trials, and the universal report of the people, have shown that this was a general practice. It has been found difficult to eradicate this vicious propensity among the native officials, if indeed it is yet altogether eradicated." No wonder the people regarded government officials under their king's rule as wholly an evil, to be borne as cheerfully as might be along with the other evils to which mankind is liable. Hence the Burmese proverb, "Fire, war, storms, robbers, rulers, these are the five great evils." [1] This attitude has become instinctive, and it is our misfortune that it has survived even after conditions have changed.

Under the British Government the powers of headmen are limited and defined, and their position is at the same time assured so long as they do not flagrantly misconduct themselves. They are still elected for life by the villagers, usually from among the natural heirs of the last headman; and though the head of the district may for good reasons set aside the election, he does not often interfere. They collect the revenue, and are paid a commission for their services; but they are not government officials, and the tendency of subordinates to treat them as such has been repressed, with varying success, by repeated orders from headquarters. They are authorized to inflict fines and even imprisonment for petty offences. Their power is very great, and it might be thought that they have unlimited opportunities for the malpractices common among oriental officials. But the fact that they have to live with the people to whom they dispense justice, and that everyone knows everyone else's affairs, makes all the difference between them and officials who live at a little distance. On the whole they perform their duties honestly and efficiently. They are treated with respect, and have good traditions to live up to. The general dislike for officials does not extend to them.[2]

[1] Translation in Fielding Hall's *Soul of a People*.

[2] See Note A, p. 201. The political agitation which has been directed against the headmen during the last few years has caused

In the towns the village headmen are replaced by ward headmen, who collect both government and municipal taxes. They are not given judicial powers, and their status suffers accordingly. I can only guess the reason. Perhaps it was thought that in towns there were persons of superior social position or education whom it was undesirable to subject to the jurisdiction of a ward headman. But many quite uneducated persons have been appointed as honorary magistrates, on the model of English justices of the peace, in the larger towns.[1] There seems no sufficient reason why ward headmen should not have generally the same powers as village headmen, and if this were done there is no doubt that a better class of men would be obtained. Even as it is, I have known well-to-do Burman townsmen undertake these unpleasant and thankless duties purely from a sense of public spirit, a spirit which ought to be encouraged.

Thus Burma has always had a system of local self-government, working on the whole efficiently and smoothly. When life was simple, and the communal needs of the people few, it was all that was wanted. If the villagers desired a bridge over a stream, or a road to the next village, or a monastery school; if a canal had to be unsilted, or its banks built up; or if fields had to be protected from inroads of the sea: the whole village turned out and did the work without any remuneration, unless one of their number, who was better off than the rest, chose to give a feast or a dramatic performance as a reward. With the whole population, men, women, and children, working together, it was great fun. No doubt there were shirkers, but if public opinion could not adequately deal with them they could be fined by the headman, or even put in the stocks. More than once I have been told, when I wanted a road made, and asked how many men the village could supply at the usual rate of wages, that the

this statement to be less true than formerly; but I have left it unaltered, as I have no evidence that it has ceased to be true of the country generally. Such changes are apt to seem greater than they are, even to quite impartial observers.

[1] See p. 71.

villagers would rather turn out all together and do the work for nothing.

Such a system, however, could not be enforced or even sanctioned by our Government. It was, in fact, forced labour, and was liable to abuse. The only case I know of in which it has been legalized is that of the old irrigation system in Upper Burma, where in certain circumstances the population may be called out by the headmen at the bidding of a magistrate to prevent a sudden breach in a canal. For modern embankments a government official keeps a gang of coolies always in readiness.

With a more complicated mode of life and wider needs it was obvious that a more defined organization was necessary, and that it must be allowed to work over a wider area. Collections of money from villagers for a public purpose were often made by headmen, but these were unauthorized, and the practice was liable to abuse. With proper safeguards there seems no reason why each village should not impose on itself taxes to be spent by a village committee including the headman. But there still remains the difficulty that many works extend over a wider area than a village, and also require a trained staff and expert knowledge for their construction. The natural solution seems to be a committee of headmen with a trained staff, the benefit of expert advice, and powers of taxation and expenditure. Petty works could be carried out by such a committee, and more important ones by a body working over a larger area, to which the local committees would send delegates. Towns containing a number of village or ward headmen would naturally have their own committees.

This solution, however, was not adopted by our government. For village works the villagers were usually left to make their own arrangements; but what was practically a share of the land revenue was handed over to the district officer, and he could use this money for works which required a trained staff, or make a small grant to be spent by the headman. He could also build markets and run ferries, and the proceeds of these went to the district fund. The biggest works were carried out by a separate depart-

ment of the Government, from provincial revenues. In the towns municipal committees were formed, nearly all at first appointed by the Government from among leading townsmen or educated people (including officials) who might be supposed to take an interest in the town. The ward headmen were ignored. The committees were presided over by the district officer, or by the subdivisional or township officer if the town was not at the district headquarters.

The real work, therefore, was done by officials of the Government, and usually it was well done. In towns the people could find out, if they chose, what use was made of the money they paid in rates, though they had no real control over the expenditure. The rates were much lightened by the practice, which obtained from the first, of setting apart a piece of land in the middle of the town and building on it a public market. As the town grew, this land became extremely valuable. The aggregate of market rents, in towns outside Rangoon, is more than double the aggregate of the rates, other than rates for special services. In some towns the proportion is six, seven, or eight to one. Only Maulmein, where the public market was for some obscure reason sold about sixty years ago, has to depend mainly on its rates. It is remarkable that the other municipalities, taken together, spend more than the whole proceeds of the general rate in providing hospitals where the poor are treated free of charge. In other words, the general administration, roads and bridges, public buildings, and education are paid for out of the market rents, as well as all other needs except conservancy, lighting, and water; and to a great extent even these, for the special rates nothing like cover the expenditure. In hospital provision Burma is far ahead of England. It was somewhat of a shock to me to visit a well-known London hospital after going over the perfectly appointed building in Rangoon.[1]

The formation of municipal committees with unofficial members appointed by the State was regarded as a first step towards self-government. I think it was an unfortunate step. Oriental governments are accustomed to buy the

[1] See Note B, Market Rents, p. 205.

loyalty of prominent men by giving them posts out of which they can make money at the expense of the people. Naturally the men who were offered the post of municipal commissioner thought their loyalty was being bought in the same way. When they found they could make little or nothing for themselves or their friends, owing to the obstinacy of a foreign president who was also chief executive officer and had all the real power, they took little interest in municipal affairs. This unconcern had an amusing result in a resolution passed by the Kyauksè municipal committee in 1893. It was unanimously decided, at a meeting in which unofficial Burmese members were in a majority, to ask the Government to abolish the municipality, chiefly on the ground of "general apathy and lack of interest shown by the local Burmese members". The resolution was submitted to the Government, apparently in all seriousness, by my predecessor.

Recently the municipal committees have been made elective, and non-officials appointed as presidents in nearly all towns. How far this has been a success I do not know. I fear a bad tradition has been established, and that municipal commissioners, unless a new spirit has come into them, are not more likely to work for the good of the townspeople than before. On the other hand they have lost the able and disinterested assistance, or rather control, of trained officials. It would have been better to have scrapped the whole system, and started afresh. Though the tradition of public service among ward headmen has to a great extent been lost, it is not too late [1] even now to make use of it. They should have been from the first the unofficial members of municipal committees, and should have been treated as the spokesmen of their wards. They could now be given the same powers as a village headman, and elected, at first at any rate, for short periods, on the understanding that

[1] It may be said that it is too late for British officials to do this now, in view of the opposition of the Burman ministers. But in this as in other cases I am contemplating the Government as a whole, including the Burman ministers. Moreover, it does not follow, because certain Burmans now in high places despise the institutions of their country, that those who succeed them will always do so.

they will represent their wards on the municipal committee. A different type of ward headman could thus be obtained, and though it would be advisable for some time to have an official president to guide them and control the permanent staff, he could soon be spared with greater safety than under the present system.

In a large town in Lower Burma there is a bench of unpaid magistrates, appointed by the Government from among the leading townspeople, and empowered to try petty offences. Some years ago, on the death of one of the magistrates, his son went to the Commissioner of the Division, and asked to be appointed in his father's stead. The Commissioner pointed out to him that he was much too young, and had not attained to the influential position among the townspeople that his father held when he was selected. "But," said the young man, "if I am not appointed in my father's place, how am I to live?"

This story is not told to show that Burmans are generally more prone to corruption than Englishmen. This is undoubtedly true, but it is only a part of the truth. What I wish to show is that in both countries there are certain institutions which have grown up gradually and carry with them a tradition of public service. In these institutions the tradition is on the whole honourably followed, and its standard is maintained by the pressure of public opinion. But where strange institutions of foreign origin have been introduced public opinion fails to act, or is absent altogether; because the people do not understand them and are apt to attribute any defects in their working to the institution themselves. This important truth has not, I think, been sufficiently realized in our attempt to introduce democracy into Burma.

Outside the municipal towns an entirely new scheme of local government was introduced in 1921. Districts were divided into circles, and circles into groups of village-tracts. The residents of each group then elected one of their number to serve on a circle board, and each circle board elected one of its members to serve on a district council. No officials

are eligible for election on either boards or councils. They may be co-opted, but even then can only give advice. Village headmen may serve, but if elected to a district council must resign the headmanship. The district councils have considerable powers of taxation, and are also provided by the Government with what is practically a share of the land revenue. They may also take over the capitation or household tax,[1] on condition that they levy in its stead a tax graduated according to the circumstances and property of each person assessed, and averaging not less than two (2s. 8d.) or more than eight rupees (10s. 8d.) per caput per annum. Existing markets are handed over to them, and they may build new ones and levy rents in them. They are made responsible for vernacular education, for local communications, and for hospitals and public health. They may allot funds to circle boards, but not, apparently, to village committees. No report on the working of the scheme has yet been published, but I understand that the district councils have not generally utilized their powers to impose a tax in lieu of the household and capitation taxes.

Working side by side with this elective system is an official one, spread over the country and in close touch with the people. The civil service in Burma is a far more highly organized machine than its counterpart in England. That is because many functions which are undertaken in England by private individuals or organizations are performed in Burma (far more economically, if not more efficiently) by the civil service. Civil engineers, architects, and land surveyors, qualified doctors and veterinary surgeons, and experts in agriculture and irrigation, forest conservation and arboriculture—all, with rare exceptions, serve the whole community on salaries, and not individuals for fees. Moreover much of the work, especially in connection with the land, which is done in England by solicitors and notaries, and by the banks, is performed in Burma by government officials. The land, too, is a public estate, administered (except the forests) by the township officers with the help of a land records department; and they have

[1] See p. 78, and Note D, p. 227.

control over waste lands, and lands on which a landholder's right has not yet been acquired. Forest lands are controlled by an expert forest department. Even the post-office does more for the public than in England, for it undertakes to collect the price of goods posted by the seller thereof. Judges and magistrates are more accessible, and it is far easier to get justice done without the help of a lawyer. Petition-writers, for a few pence, do much of the work which is done in England by lawyers for pounds. All this throws more work on the officials.

The fifteen thousand village-tracts in Burma are grouped into some two hundred townships in charge of salaried Burman officers, who supervise the land and village systems; settle disputes, and inquire into complaints against headmen; help to suppress serious crime; collect revenue, and act as government bankers; register deeds, and issue stamps for sale; and are also, except in the most populous districts, magistrates and judges. Most of their powers are strictly defined by law, rule, or printed order. Within those powers they act on their own responsibility, subject to appeal; outside them they must obtain the orders of higher authority. There are usually two or three townships in a subdivision, and two or three subdivisions in a district. From three to eight districts form a division, and there are eight divisions in the province. Subdivisional officers are usually Burman, district and divisional officers English. All of them have their powers defined, like the township officer. At every divisional headquarters there is a Commissioner in charge of the division, a Deputy Commissioner in charge of the district, a Subdivisional Officer in charge of the subdivision, and a Township Officer in charge of the township; but each has his own powers and responsibilities, and there is, as a rule, no issuing of orders in the name of higher officials. This system makes for independence of judgment and a sense of responsibility. Altogether three-fourths of the service is Burmese, the rest European and Eurasian.

Among Burman officials who hold these appointments there is certainly some corruption, though I believe many of

them to be perfectly straight. It is not really worth their while to take bribes, or it would not be if all the European officers over them were determined to prevent it. Rumours are not to be trusted; but when a magistrate habitually sends poor men to jail on insufficient evidence, while acquitting those who have money or treating them leniently if obliged to convict them, one may be pretty sure that he is corrupt. There are other practices, too, from which inferences may fairly be drawn. One of them is mentioned on p. 165.

Thus in the general administration the lowest rank which deals with the people and their representatives, the headmen, is that of Township Officer; a dignified position much sought after, and well paid having regard to the standard of living in the country. Most Township Officers have an English education. There is a sharp line of demarcation between them and the clerks, who have no power to take decisions and should have no dealings with the people, and therefore few opportunities for extortion and bribe-taking, if the officers over them do their duty.

I have only known of one district officer who did not receive petitions himself, but allowed a clerk to collect them. This resulted, when I succeeded him many years ago, in an entertaining anonymous petition against the bench clerk, sent to me by post. There was always, it said, something wrong with the petitions presented to the clerk, unless it was made worth his while to accept them. They were too long, or too short; the paper on which they were written was too thick, or it was too thin; the margin was too wide, or too narrow; the meaning was not clear, and so on.

When I was still a Subdivisional Officer I had under me a clerk on twenty-five rupees a month who was reputed to have done very well under my predecessor. He had acquired two wives and a pony and trap. He knew no English, but was a smart youngster, and very useful on tour. I was even younger than he, and no doubt he thought he was going to have a good time with me. He accompanied me on one of my tours to a very remote part of the subdivision, where I put up in a disused monastery.

Early one morning I woke and saw an old Burman in my room. He was evidently poor, and he had a pitiful tale to tell me. His sole means of subsistence was a fruit-garden, of which he had enjoyed the fruit for many years. He was now informed that it lay within the boundaries of a public grazing-ground. He had received official notice to quit, and was threatened with a prosecution. To cultivate land within a public grazing-ground is a criminal offence. I ascertained afterwards that his garden was indeed within the grazing-ground boundaries, but that it had existed for years before the grazing-ground was set apart by Government. A careless or corrupt surveyor had omitted to show it in the map, and it had been included by mistake.

I had lifted my mosquito-curtains, and was sitting in my pyjamas on the edge of my camp-bed. The old man squatted on the floor by me. As he talked I saw his hand go to my bedding. I lifted up the mattress, and found two silver rupees under it. I felt inclined to laugh, but asked, as sternly as I could, what the money was for. The poor old fellow was terrified. I returned the coins, told him I would inquire into his case, and sent him away. As he left the building I heard my clerk of the two wives abusing him, angrily and volubly, but not too loud. What he said I never knew, but no doubt the old man understood then, if not before, that he had offered the bribe to the wrong person. It is hardly necessary to add that the boundaries of the grazing-ground were altered, and that he kept his garden.

It would be well if in other departments also there were no underlings authorized to deal with the people. Unfortunately this is impossible. There must be police constables to keep order and help in the detection of crime; process-servers to serve summonses;[1] forest guards to prevent the destruction of valuable forests; excisemen to keep down smuggling; surveyors to register rights over land. In an oriental country these petty officials, so often corrupt and

[1] The process-servers are to a great extent under the Township Officers, most of whom are also magistrates, but for this purpose the judiciary is treated as a separate department.

oppressive, are a necessary evil. There is nothing to be done but to keep down their numbers as much as possible by substituting fewer well-paid men for a greater number of cheap inefficients; to inquire promptly and energetically into any charges of oppression and extortion; to forbid and punish practices which facilitate corruption; and to make it understood that we attach greater importance to honesty than to smartness and obedience. Fortunately there are not many Englishmen like the police-officer who excused himself for promoting a subordinate known by him to be corrupt by saying that all Burmans were blackguards, and that he preferred a clever blackguard to a stupid one. But to my mind there is often too great a tendency to be lenient towards offences against the public, and severe towards those against the administration. Two cases will show what I mean. A Eurasian inspector of police who committed extortion was pardoned and reinstated on the ground of his youth. A Eurasian police-clerk of long service, who borrowed a few pounds from the cash-chest and was unable to repay the money, was sentenced by me (in view of his certain dismissal) to a month's imprisonment, and I was told that the sentence was inadequate. To me the former offence appeared the more serious of the two, apart from the fact that it was difficult to detect.

The low esteem in which petty officials are held by the Burmese was first brought home to me some thirty years ago. It was a Buddhist holiday, and the courts were closed. I had been working hard in a heavy subdivision, and chose the only form of relaxation available—snipe-shooting in the marshes behind the town. I told my head servant, an intelligent Burman whose portrait is on p. 23 of *The Silken East*, that I wanted all the men in the house to accompany me. He replied that they would go if I ordered them to do so, but that that day was the most sacred in the year for Buddhists, and that they would certainly go to hell if they assisted in the taking of life then; on any other day it would not much matter. But there were plenty of Burman constables in the police-station who

would be willing to go with me. Could I not take some of these? "But," I objected, "the police are all Buddhists too." "Oh!" said he, "they'll go to hell anyway!"

From the framework of the government we pass to the means by which the government is carried on, and the manner in which its revenues are spent. Excluding the commercial services (railways, post-office, etc.) the total revenue is between eleven and twelve million sterling. Not all of this, however, is retained in Burma. The revenue under certain heads goes to the Government of India, including two million from import duties, half a million from an export duty on rice, a million from an excise duty on kerosene oil and motor-spirit, a million from income-tax, and some small amounts from salt and opium; about five million in all. The Government of India's expenditure in Burma, including political but not military outgoings, is under a million.

Of the six and a half million received by the Burma Government over a third is from the land, a fifth from forests, an eighth from excise, a tenth from capitation (or poll) and household taxes, and the rest mostly from fisheries, court fees and fines, and petroleum. Its net income from forests is over three-quarters of a million. It spends about a million and a half on roads and buildings, and an equal amount in all on forests, railway construction, and irrigation, all productive of revenue; a million on the general administration and courts of justice; a million on the police; half a million on education; rather less on commission to headmen for the collection of revenue and on maintenance of surveys and land registers; and a third of a million each on public health and on loans, mostly for agriculture.

For the ordinary Burman the only real taxes of any importance are the customs import duties and the capitation or household tax. None of these can be pronounced satisfactory. The import duties are levied on almost every article imported, and have grown with the wealth of the country till they yield almost as much as the land revenue.

They are open in principle to serious objection. A customs duty of fifteen per cent. on cotton clothing falls on the poorest, without benefiting the country in any way. Chinese and Japanese silks are taxed thirty per cent. This must appreciably enhance the cost of the silk turban which every Burman rustic habitually wears, and of the raiment, but lately made in Burma from Chinese raw silk, without which no self-respecting man or woman would be seen on gala days.

The export duty on rice is levied at the rate of three annas a maund, or about twopence for a fifty-pound basket, sold retail in Burma at nine shillings or so. So far as it affects the world price of rice, it is paid by the foreign consumer; so far as it does not, it falls in the last resort on the landholder, and tends to keep down both rents and the price of rice to the Burman consumer. Assuming the whole of it to fall on the landholder, its incidence is something like a shilling an acre.

The capitation-tax is a poll-tax, levied in Lower Burma, of two and a half rupees (3s. 4d.) a year on a bachelor and twice that amount on a married man; it being assumed, apparently, that a wife is as efficient a bread-winner as her husband. Such a tax is unknown in India, and, however sound it may have been in the early days of our occupation, it cannot now be justified on any ground. It gives a good deal of trouble in collection, and its yield is small as compared with that of the land revenue and the customs. Its history, so far as it can be ascertained from the imperfect records in the India Office, is told in Note D at the end of the book.

The household tax is the corresponding impost in Upper Burma. A demand is made from each village according to the number of houses therein, and distributed by a committee of the villagers themselves, each household paying according to its means. That, at least, is the theory, and in some parts the system still works well enough. In others, I am told, the tax tends more and more to become a poll-tax, and therefore to fall more heavily on the poor. The amount under the Burmese king was ten rupees (13s. 4d.)

a household, but has been reduced considerably in many districts where land formerly exempt has been assessed to revenue.

Of the other sources of income the land revenue, as is shown in Note C, is really a rent which in the long run would be payable to a landlord if it were not taken from the cultivator by the State. The income-tax is levied only on non-agricultural incomes exceeding two thousand rupees (£133) a year, and chiefly affects the foreign community. The forests are a national estate, costing the people nothing and bringing a handsome profit in relief of taxation. Liquor and opium are forbidden to the Burman by his religion, and he pays only a small part of the revenue from them. Tobacco, the one universal luxury, is not taxed unless it comes from abroad, and there is a good and plentiful supply in Burma and India. The fishery revenue is mostly of the nature of a rent. The salt-tax, though heavier than in India, is less than fourpence a head per annum.

The system under which opium is sold is interesting on account of the way in which it deals with a difficult problem. Sales are strictly supervised by well-paid Government officials, and are made only in their presence. Every purchaser must be registered, and at each purchase must produce a ticket on which the issue of opium is entered with the date. He is allowed only enough for his own consumption, and if there is reason to suspect that he is passing on the opium to others his allowance is cut down. The retail price is far above the cost of production, and out of the large profits thus obtained the State is able to maintain an establishment for the suppression of smuggling as well as the supervision of sales. Smuggling is thus kept within bounds, though the difficulties are enormous with a long land frontier and a drug that is sold at more than its weight in silver; while at the same time machinery exists, without any cost to the taxpayer, whereby licit consumption can at any time be reduced or even suppressed, should this be found possible without unduly encouraging smugglers.

By this machinery the opium-habit among Burmans, once widespread,[1] has by degrees been reduced to small proportions in spite of the great increase in purchasing-power. Burmans were given permission to register themselves before a certain date, but once this was done the door was closed, and the registered Burman consumers have since dwindled to about four thousand, most of them in Arakan. Even if several times this number get their supplies from foreigners who are registered consumers, the number, outside malarial Arakan, would not exceed one in a thousand of the population.

This system is not applied to alcohol. Unlike opium, spirit can be produced by anyone from rice with a couple of pots, a fire, and a tube for carrying off the condensed steam. The hill tribes make their own spirit, and consume large quantities on festive occasions. In the plains private distillation is forbidden by law, but is difficult to suppress, in spite of the absolute prohibition of the use of alcohol by the Buddhist religion. It might be thought that good Buddhists would assist the police and excise officers in this matter, but whatever their private influence may be they seldom come forward. The right to make and sell alcoholic liquor is sold by auction annually in each district. In Upper Burma salé to Burmans is nominally forbidden, but the prohibition is perhaps not much more effective than that of the Buddhist Church. Nevertheless, I satisfied myself that in the upper reaches of the Chindwin the use of liquor was unknown among people calling themselves Burmans, in spite of, or perhaps because of, the drinking habits of the tribes on their borders, to whom many of them were closely related.

[1] Notwithstanding the Buddhist prohibition, the Burman has for centuries been a consumer of opium, although before the British annexations he had little wherewith to pay for it. Ralph Fitch, who visited Burma towards the end of the sixteenth century, records :— "In India there are few commodities which serve for Pegu, except opium of Cambaia, painted cloth of S. Thome, or of Masulipatam, and white cloth of Bengala, which is spent there in great quantity. . . . To Cirion, a port of Pegu, come ships from Mecca with woollen cloth, scarlets, velvets, opium, and such like." (Foster, *Early Travels in India*, pp. 34, 35; also in Hakluyt.)

The expenditure of nearly half a million sterling on commission to headmen and maintenance of the survey and land registers may seem large in proportion to the revenue. But the headmen perform invaluable services in addition to the collection of revenue, and the registers and maps are useful for other than revenue purposes. A fair and accurate assessment of land is impossible without an elaborate system of survey. All towns have been surveyed on a large scale, and except in outlying parts all cultivated land in Burma has been mapped in minute detail, the boundary of each field being shown as well as the nature of the occupancy. The survey, once made, is kept up to date by a permanent staff, which also calculates the money due on each holding. So detailed a survey does not seem to have been attempted in any other part of the Indian Empire. It is of great value to the people, as it forms a record of which anyone may obtain a copy on payment of a small fee; and it goes far to prevent disputes and litigation which would otherwise be unending in a country where the land is constantly changing hands. Such disputes are not altogether excluded, as the record is based on the untested statements of the occupants or claimants to the land, and is liable to amendment by the civil court. It has therefore been suggested that a record of rights should be prepared, based on inquiries by reliable officers whose decision would not be liable to be called in question by a civil court, though anyone who has profited by it could be sued for damages. But this proposal has not been adopted, and after all the important thing is to have the claims, whatever their justification, accurately surveyed each year and placed permanently on record.

Far more serious for the Burman than any taxation is the great rise in the cost of living. Rice, the staple food, costs between two and three times as much as it did fifteen years ago. The price of cotton and silk, nearly all imported, has risen greatly in the world's markets apart from the local duty. The cultivator benefits by higher prices for his produce, but the greater cost of food bears hardly on the labourer, whose money wages have not risen in proportion,

and on some other sections of the poor. The rise does not appear to be due to any inflation of the currency. Nor is it due to taxation, for nearly all the food-stuffs are produced in the country. Indeed the export tax on rice has a contrary tendency. It is owing mainly to the increased demand abroad for Burma products and to the general advance in the price of foreign articles on which Burma depends. The country on the whole has benefited, but the poor have become poorer, and it is not surprising that crime has increased.

Burma has long had a bad record for crime. In 1923 there were fifty murders, and a hundred and eighteen cases of grievous hurt, for every million of the population. Even in the Panjab the number of murders did not exceed thirty-four to the million, and in other provinces of India it was much less. In England and Wales, during 1922, murders were about four to the million, and cases of wounding about sixteen. The Burma figures, however, are not surprising in view of the Burman's quick temper, his sensitiveness to insult, and the young men's habit of carrying sharp-pointed knives. To go armed with a dagger is a criminal offence, but large clasp-knives with blunt edges and sharp points, made with catches to prevent their closing on the fingers, and useless (in Lower Burma at any rate) for any purpose but stabbing, are on sale in the public markets. The Chief Court held some years ago that they were not daggers for the purpose of the Arms Act, and the Local Government has not yet, as it might do, included them in the list of proscribed weapons.

Robberies have doubled in number since the war. Though there has been a corresponding increase of crime in other provinces of India, none of them shows anything like so high a figure as Burma. In 1923 there were eleven hundred and forty-one robberies, or ninety for every million of the population; and a third of these were gang robberies, in the course of which twenty-four murders were committed. The Panjab figure was thirty-seven to the million, the English five.

Thefts and burglaries recorded by the police were

seventeen hundred and thirteen to the million in Burma, and eleven hundred and sixty-eight in the Panjab. The figure for England and Wales was 2,326, but it must be remembered that petty thefts (of property worth less than five rupees, or 6s. 8d.) are usually dealt with in Burma by the headmen, and are not included in the returns.

The Burma figures are the more remarkable as there is but little crime in Upper Burma. Their high level is produced year after year by a few districts in the delta. The chief cause, so far as crimes affecting property are concerned, is undoubtedly economic. In these districts there has been a rapid increase, and at the same time a redistribution, of wealth. The increase has been general among the farmers and peasant-proprietors, who form the bulk of the population. But it has been accompanied by the growth of an agricultural proletariat which has not shared in the general prosperity. Money wages have not increased very much, though the cost of living has doubled or trebled, and the standard of comfort of the majority of the people has risen greatly at the same time. The accumulation of wealth, moreover, has not been in large towns, as in other countries where there has been a rapid development, but mostly in villages, where large sums of money are habitually kept in the flimsiest of houses. It is small wonder that the gangs of outlaws who preyed on the people under the Burmese king, and for a long time after successive annexations, but were gradually suppressed under a strong Government, have revived under such tempting conditions. Only they no longer live together in the forest and levy petty tribute on neighbouring villages. They collect by rail, boat, and steamer, attack by night, often with guns, the house of some well-to-do farmer or trader, divide their booty before daylight, and scatter again to their homes.

Most of the criminals are Burman agricultural labourers, a class which is still small in proportion to the whole agricultural population. The census gives the total number of agricultural labourers as three-quarters of a million, of whom about half a million are in the delta; but many of

these must have been members of the farmer's family, and a certain proportion were Indians.

Indian labourers come over every year in many thousands for the cultivating season, returning to their homes after the harvest. Their standard of life is much lower than that of the Burman, who, even if he has sunk to the position of labourer, belongs to the same social class as the farmer and peasant proprietor; and it is this cheap labour which has kept down the Burman's wages and driven him into crime.

For the recent increase in crime official reports add other reasons: the political ferment following the war, and the decline in the feeling of common village responsibility, and of readiness to accept the headman's authority, which is a natural result of economic changes. Among permanent causes of criminality must be placed the adventurous and restless character of the Burman, and corruption and inefficiency in the subordinate police. An important one, in my opinion, is the pernicious system under which men are sent to jail for what is termed " bad livelihood," without any offence being proved against them and on insufficient grounds. My opposition to this practice began in 1891, and looms large among my memories of the country.

I have shown in what way many Burmans havs fallen into the position of wage-earners. As such their standard of life is comparatively high, their wages low, even for a tropical country. There is now little or no unoccupied land in the delta. The young men sponge on their families, and are a nuisance in their villages. Seeing them idle, the headman makes use of them for unpaid village services. They become rebellious, and wander from one village to another. Some of them take to theft, or even join bands of armed robbers. The farmer's habit of keeping his money in an insecure house puts temptation in their way. But even those who have not taken to crime are regarded as a nuisance by their elders. If they do not suffer themselves to be made use of by the headmen or by the police, certain sections of the criminal code are invoked under which they can be called upon to find sureties for their good behaviour,

and sent to jail if they cannot do so. My experience in Burma was that a statement by a few men of substance that so-and-so had no regular work, or that they had heard that he was a thief, was usually accepted by the magistrate as sufficient ground for such an order. Having no money to hire sureties, the man went to jail; for it was seldom that anyone, without substantial payment, would offer himself as a surety for him, and thus risk the displeasure of headman and police, whose object was to get him into jail. Too often he came out of jail a hardened criminal, with possibly a determination not to get there again without at least having had a run for his money. Successful crime would keep him out, so long as he pleased those who had power over him; abstention from crime would not, if he failed to please. Having been in jail, he was always liable to be sent back. If he had a conviction for theft against him he was even more liable, for it was always easy to get someone to say that he was reputed to be a thief, and by a special provision of the code repute is admissible in evidence. In this way about ten thousand persons have in the last dozen years been sent to jail for six months or more, mostly in the delta, after proceedings in which no offence had been proved against them. At the same time the fatal ease with which men without money or friends could be sent to prison prevented both police and people from taking the trouble to detect the real criminals. So the robbers, thieves, and burglars often escaped altogether, and those who made a living out of crime, even if called upon to find sureties, had money enough to hire them. It is not surprising that statistics show the delta of the Irrawaddy to be the most criminal part of the Indian Empire.

It is only fair to say that this system received much support in my time from Burmese public opinion. It would be too much to expect that those who are in comfortable circumstances should sympathize with potential thieves in their midst, or that they should take longer views than the foreign administrators who were not so biased by their own interests. On the other hand many of the younger British officials and some of the older ones had already,

long before I left Burma, recognized the injustice and stupidity of the system. Indeed the best police officers I knew were always against it.

It would be misleading, too, to leave the reader with the impression that there is less individual liberty in Burma than in England. On the whole I believe the Burman to be a freer man than the Englishman. Much depends, of course, on what we mean by freedom. To some it means the opportunity of acquiring power over others, whether it be political, or economic, or spiritual, or other kinds of power. To such people a country is free in proportion as it enables them to make use of their special aptitudes in attaining power. But that is not what I mean when I say that a Burman is on the whole freer than an Englishman. I mean that, taking the whole people, the sum of individual freedom is greater.

Freedom in a country depends, in the first place, on the ability of its Government to protect person and property, and then on the justice of the laws and their administration. In these respects there is no great difference between the two countries. There is certainly greater danger of innocent men getting into jail in Burma, for the subordinate magistrates are often corrupt, and corrupt magistrates make up for their leniency to those who have money to pay them by convicting on insufficient evidence those who have none. There is also less efficient protection to person and property. But these things affect only a small part of the population, and on the other hand the laws in Burma are in some respects juster. It is in its economic conditions that Burma is freer.

The industrial revolution which began more than a hundred years ago to convert most Englishmen into wage-earners has not yet reached Burma. Wage-earners are comparatively few. Most of those engaged in agriculture are, as we have seen, in the delta, and even there they and their dependents form less than half the agricultural population. Elsewhere they are usually apprentices, who look forward to a more independent life. Only an infinitesimal part of the Burmese people is industrial in our sense. In

the whole of Burma, according to the last census, the population engaged in industries employing more than ten persons was only a hundred and eighteen thousand, and of these some two-thirds were Indians. In the principal industries—oil-refineries, rice-mills, saw-mills, and railways—the proportion of Indians was nearly three-fourths. Most of the Burman labourers are young bachelors and (in Upper Burma) girls, who soon settle down to other occupations; or rolling stones who prefer not to settle down at all. Over a large part of Burma there are no persons working regularly for hire. Outside the delta there is little wealth, but what exists is not unevenly distributed. The people are peasant-proprietors or small farmers, working their fields and gardens and tending their cattle themselves with their families; or they are independent craftsmen or traders, or perhaps doctors or teachers, cartmen or boat-owners. Even the population of Mandalay city, 188,815 in 1891, a few years after it had ceased to be a royal capital, and still 148,917, is nearly all engaged in home industries and petty trading. One result of this medieval state of things is that, excluding the comparatively small labouring population of the delta, nearly every head of a household is his own master, taking orders from none but the village headman and government officials, and undisturbed by the fear of having his means of livelihood suddenly cut off owing to such obscure phenomena as over-production, or deflation of currency, or depression in foreign exchanges.

But these conditions exist also in other oriental countries, and are not inconsistent with extreme poverty; which can, indeed, be seen in those parts of India and China where the population, remaining agricultural, has increased till the land is insufficient to support it. There is no such poverty in Burma. Even now a living is easily made without excessive toil, though not so easily as a few years ago. That is because Burma, as we have seen, is thinly populated, even for an agricultural country. There is still an abundance of fertile land, in the far north and elsewhere, to be had for the asking, and in spite of economic changes no one need long be in want of employment.

In estimating the sum of economic freedom in a country we must consider women as well as men. If we do so we shall find an even greater advantage on the side of Burma. The retail trade of the country, so far as it is in the hands of natives,[1] is carried on almost entirely by women, either in their homes or in the municipal markets; and there are few other occupations from which women are altogether excluded. Thus both wives and unmarried women are in a position of economic independence in relation to men which it would be hard, perhaps, to match in any other country of importance; and, as women in our own country are beginning to find out, it is really the economic independence that matters.

Economic freedom, indeed, is not one of the blessings conferred on our people by modern civilization. But among those blessings we count social and religious freedom, which have certainly grown with the centuries, and on which we can fairly congratulate ourselves when we consider the condition of most countries less advanced than our own. In India, despite a government which enforces some respect for liberty, there still flourish the caste system and the harem, which are the very antithesis of social freedom, and there is a great deal of religious intolerance and priestly domination. Now India is next door to Burma, and has, moreover, given the Burmese in the past whatever they had of outside civilization. We might fairly expect, therefore, to find little social and religious freedom in Burma. What we do find is a completer absence of caste than any-

[1] I use this word in its proper sense. In the Rangoon press, and even sometimes in official reports, it is applied to Indians (who are, of course, foreigners in Burma) as distinguished from the natives of the country. Absurd as this usage is, Burmans may take it as a compliment. Those who have used the word in India as a term of contempt (with their thoughtless imitators) hesitate, it seems, when they come to Burma, to apply it to the Burmese. The proper remedy is not to avoid the word, but to cease to regard it as a term of contempt. The same may be said of the term Eurasian, foolishly abandoned because it was the name of a class which some people despised. Some day, when "Anglo-Indian" has become another term of contempt, Eurasians will perhaps ask to be called Eurasians again; especially if a book which has yet to be written, entitled *Lives of Famous Eurasians*, is published and widely read.

where in Europe; no seclusion of women, and an approach to equality between the sexes. There is also a degree of religious tolerance hardly yet attained with us, for a Burman regards it as no concern of his if his neighbour (or anyone else) chooses to qualify for hell; and an order of monks which, though influential, has never acquired anything like the power of the Brahmans, or of the priesthood in Catholic countries. The contrast between Burma and India is as fundamental as it is startling. Though the gulf is made wider and deeper by circumstances, it must surely have had its beginning in the character of the people.

## CHAPTER V

# EDUCATION

IT is a remarkable fact that the Burmese had universal education of a sort long before anything of the kind existed in any European country. We do not know how long before, but in 1700 the Venetian Manucci wrote of Burma in his *Storia do Mogor*: "It is a kingdom governed by the pen, for not a single person can go from one village into another without a paper or writing, whereby the government is made most easy." A century later Father Sangermano, an Italian priest who lived in Burma from 1783 to 1806, recorded that "there are few among the Burmese who do not know how to read and write; for the Talapoins,[1] to whose care they are entrusted as soon as they attain the age of reason, always teach them to read, as also to write on the palm-leaf or *prabaich*, which is a sort of coarse paper made of bamboo macerated in water, and coloured black with charcoal mixed with the juice of a certain leaf."

Sangermano doubtless thought it unnecessary to mention that he referred to males only. Comparatively few girls are educated in monasteries. In 1921 the percentage of literate persons (that is, persons who could read and write a letter between friends) to the whole population above the age of ten was 57·6 for males and 12·3 for females.

[1] According to Hobson-Jobson this word, said to be of obscure origin, was used by the Portuguese to designate the Buddhist monks of Ceylon and Indo-China. A derivation from the Pali word for a fan is suggested. But a more probable one is that given in Foster's *Early Travels in India* on the authority of Mr. C. O. Blagden, who says that *tala poe*, "my lord," is a Mon form of address to Buddhist monks.

VILLAGE SCHOOL AT MĀSEIN, UPPER CHINDWIN

At the same time the percentages in India were 16·1 and 2·3.

Why has Burma so long had universal elementary education, while India is still without it? No doubt some would give the credit to the Buddhist religion. It is true that elementary education in Burma is co-extensive with Buddhism, but India was once largely Buddhist, and Ceylon, Tibet, and Siam are Buddhist now. In none of these countries do the monks occupy themselves in education to anything like the extent that they do in Burma. The desire to give their children the means of acquiring knowledge must be placed to the credit of the Burmese people.

In view of these facts, and of the success of the monastery school as a civilizing agent among wild tribes, it is not surprising that the British Government proposed to graft its educational system on to that of the monasteries. This policy was set forth by Sir Arthur Phayre, the first Chief Commissioner, in a memorandum written in 1865. The monks were to be supplied with books on arithmetic, land-measuring, and geography. Eventually astronomy and ancient history as taught in Europe (a quaint choice of subjects it seems to us now) were to be added. In the alternative, instructors were to be sent round to the monasteries to give lessons to the probationers with a view to their becoming teachers. The record of vernacular education in Burma, ever since then, has been one of continuous efforts on the part of the Government to induce the monks to come into the educational system. When one plan failed, another was adopted. Provision of books proving useless, itinerant teachers were sent round the country; when this failed, money grants were tried, and abandoned; lay teachers, appointed and paid by the Government, were supplied to the monasteries; but they incurred the dislike of the monks, and money grants were resumed, the Department accepting a lower standard of efficiency from the monasteries than from lay schools. At present nearly two thousand monasteries receive grants. But the eighty thousand children attending them are only one-fourth of those attending primary schools recognized

by the Department; and their number is likely to decrease, as it is proposed to treat monastic and lay schools alike in future. Moreover it is estimated that a quarter of a million children attend unrecognized schools, and outside these again there are at least a million (mostly girls and non-Burmans) between the age of six and eleven who attend no school at all.

There can hardly be any doubt that, despite all the efforts of Government, monastery education generally has gone back under British rule. With incomparably greater opportunities for the honest acquisition of wealth, and with many honourable occupations now open to them, intelligent men are no longer attracted to the monasteries. The monks are ignorant, and disinclined to teach even the rudiments of reading and writing. The people send their children to a lay school, however inefficient, where there is one, in preference to a monastery, even if they have to support the schoolmaster in addition to the monks. They might, if they chose, invite only intelligent and educated monks to their villages, but there seems to be no movement in this direction. Nor is the Buddhist hierarchy making any effort to raise the standard of education in the Order. On the contrary, its head at Mandalay has, through his representative on a committee on education which reported in 1924, expressed his disapproval of the participation of monks in secular education. The receipt of money from Government and the acceptance of government control are opposed to the rules of the Order. This attitude is not altogether regrettable. It makes it unnecessary for the Government to refrain from establishing lay schools for fear of competing with the monasteries, and if maintained it will save education from being made a battle-ground between Church and State, as it is in so many countries. But it is clear that the attempt at co-operation has finally failed, and that education in Burma must in future be organized independently of the monasteries, though such individual monks as wish to come into the scheme can do so.

There has recently been a large increase in public expenditure on education. Ten years ago it was about a quarter

of a million sterling. The Government expenditure alone is now, as we have seen, twice that amount. In the year ending March 1923, the latest for which details are available, it was a third of a million, but municipal and local funds brought the total up to half a million. Of this sum over a half went to the aid of private schools and colleges, over a fourth to institutions under public management, a seventh to direction and inspection, and a small amount (about five per cent.) to hostels, scholarships, etc.

Every private school at which English is a compulsory subject, and which is recognized by the Education Department, receives a grant which is roughly proportionate to the number of scholars, except that it is higher for the more advanced pupils.[1] Nearly all these schools are conducted by Christian missionaries. They account for about six per cent. of the children attending recognized private schools. In other such schools the teachers' salaries and half the cost of buildings and equipment are now paid from public funds, the managers bearing the other expenses and pocketing all the fees. Only about one-fifth of the expenditure from public funds appears to go to primary schools, but four-fifths of the pupils in secondary schools are receiving primary instruction.

The implications of this policy are not easily seen. I think it is unsound from every point of view.

In the first place, while English, secondary vernacular, and a comparatively small number of primary vernacular schools, mostly in towns, are so heavily subsidized as to make the opening of a school a profitable speculation for the manager—not the teachers—the rural areas generally are left to make their own arrangements with monks or lay teachers who are quite unqualified and inefficient. There is a vast improvement in the towns, large and small; village education has not progressed, or has gone back. And it must be remembered that more than three-fourths of the population lives in villages of less than four hundred houses, and well over half in villages of less than two hundred.

[1] This is the real meaning of the new rule that the grant should be half the difference between the fees, calculated at standard rates, and the approved expenditure.

To provide a decent education for all this rural population would, of course, be very expensive. The present arrangement, by which local bodies are expected to find the money for vernacular education, while the State subsidizes the more profitable kinds, is, as pointed out in a recent education report, inequitable, and makes any real improvement impossible. If the State, however, makes itself responsible for vernacular education, the money can be found without difficulty, as I have shown in Note C. Obviously it should come from the land, and it is equally clear that no better use could be found for the surplus (or rent) than the education of the children of those whose work yields it.

The ideal would be to give every boy and girl the education he is fit for, no more and no less; paying from public funds, if necessary, not only for his tuition, but also for his board and lodging when there is no suitable school within reach of his house. A large proportion of the scholars would be unfit for secondary education; that is, they would not become more useful members of the community than they would if set to earn their living without further education; and a still larger proportion would be unfit for anything higher. If only those fitted to receive the higher education are given it, and no money is spent in assisting others to get it, I am not sure that the State could not afford the expense of free board at school and college for all who need it. This, however, is a controversial question. What should be beyond controversy is that, so long as there are boys or girls in the country who are unable to get an education for which they are fitted, no public money should be spent in providing a free or partly free education to anyone who is unfitted to receive it, or to anyone whose parents can afford to pay the whole cost.

Until this principle has been applied, it is idle to talk of insufficiency of funds. I pointed this out ten years ago in a series of articles published in the *Rangoon Times*, and afterwards in book form, under the pseudonym of Cypher. "Education above the primary stage is the monopoly of a few; no attempt is made to select children for their intelli-

gence before spending public money on them; the rich are favoured at the expense of the poor; and large sums are wasted on education which is useless, either owing to the unsuitability of the material or to conditions which cause it to cease before it can become useful. Even where scholarships are offered, the well-to-do and the people living in towns are favoured almost to the exclusion of the rest. . . .

"In one anglo-vernacular high-school under public management there are boys in the first standard of ages varying from six to fifteen. In the third the ages vary from seven to sixteen, in the fourth from nine to twenty, in the fifth from eleven to twenty-two. Boys of fourteen are found in all standards from the first to the eighth, of fifteen from the first to the ninth, of sixteen from the third to the tenth. It may safely be said that these extremes, which are obviously undesirable on more grounds than one, would not be found if education in this school were left to the ordinary laws of supply and demand. They are the result of artificial conditions which favour the rich even more than those laws do. At this school the fees, which are the parents' share of the burden, amounted not long ago to a little more than a third of the total cost of maintaining the school. It is likely that the louts of fifteen or sixteen who are being taught with little boys, and on whom an anglo-vernacular education is probably wasted, are all sons of rich men, to whom the reduced fees are nothing, and who keep their sons at school mainly at the public expense. At the same time there are no doubt, even in the same town, intelligent boys who would well repay any public money spent on them, but who do not attend the school because their parents cannot afford even the low fees charged; while it is certain that there must be many such boys in the vast population outside for whom the cost of board and lodging in addition to tuition would be out of the question.

"It seems unlikely that the anglo-vernacular schools under private management show any less partiality for dullards of rich parentage than does the school referred to above. Indeed there are reasons why the tendency

should exist among them in even greater degree. They are nearly all mission schools of one kind or another. It is natural that the missions should wish to increase the attendance at their schools to the utmost, without much regard to the intelligence of the pupils; and as they receive assistance, not only from public funds in this country, but from their own societies, they are in a position to charge low fees and so keep up their attendance."

Since then, in spite of a very large increase in expenditure, there has apparently been no general improvement in village education; nor has any attempt been made to apply the above principles. On the contrary, more public money than ever has been squandered on unsuitable material and on the education of boys and girls whose parents can quite well afford to pay for it. And not only is there this squandering of public money, but school managers are encouraged to waste it as they never were before. Some years ago, when grants were made to private schools in accordance with the number of passes, there was some incentive to the manager to select intelligent pupils and to get rid of "duds." Now that he depends on numbers, results do not matter, and his only object is to fill his school with any sort of material that he can get, and so increase both his fees and his grant.

"Every child who reaches a certain high level of intelligence ought to be provided, if necessary at the public expense, with the best education the province can give, so long as he shows himself worthy of it. As comparatively few children live at educational centres, this can only be done by the establishment of boarding-schools and of scholarships covering the cost of board and lodging as well as of tuition."

No boarding-schools seem to have been established since this was written. The expenditure on scholarships, however, has been trebled (June 1925), and a further large increase is proposed. Stipends of £8 a year are provided for board and lodging; but this amount is inadequate for poor scholars, and the transfer of children from the country to the towns seems a doubtful policy.

In England secondary education is never paid for, even in part, from public funds, without the material being to some extent selected. Private schools (including those called " public schools ") are compelled to educate a certain number of scholars free if they wish to receive a government grant; and naturally they select boys or girls who are likely to bring credit to the school. Primary education, on the other hand, is free to all who choose to avail themselves of the offer.

In Burma the case is just the reverse. Secondary education is mostly paid for from public funds, and is offered indiscriminately to all, regardless of the means of the parents or of the ability of the pupil to profit by it. Primary education, on the other hand, is never provided free from public funds (though it may be partly free), and most primary schools receive no assistance at all.

It is not too much to say that most of the money spent on secondary schools is wasted, and that much of the expenditure actually does more harm than good; while at the same time over the country at large " the hungry sheep look up, and are not fed."

I have talked to a number of educational officers in high position in Burma and India, and have never met one who disagreed with me as to principles. These are simple and clear, and were stated as follows :—

1. Public money available for education should be spent in such a way as to produce the greatest possible efficiency in the nation in proportion to the money spent.

2. No public money should be spent on education above a certain standard except on pupils selected on account of their intelligence.

3. Every child who reaches a certain high level of intelligence should be provided with the best education the province can give, if necessary at the public expense, so long as he shows himself worthy of it.

4. No public money should be spent on teaching a subject of which a little knowledge is useless without provision being made to continue the teaching, if

necessary at the public cost, to a point at which it will be useful.

I am always told that my proposals are sound, but that the difficulties in the way of changing the system are insuperable. I do not believe in these difficulties. It is not necessary to reorganize the whole system at once. Reforms can be introduced gradually without disorganizing it. No educational system can be built up in a day, as teachers have to be trained.

The first and most obvious step should be taken in secondary schools, especially those in which English is taught. A limit of age, high at first but to be gradually reduced, should be fixed for each standard. In schools under public management the parents of pupils who exceed the age limit should be called on to pay the whole cost of their education. In private schools no grant should be given for such pupils. A school that cannot pay its way under such conditions is clearly not wanted, and should be closed.

Next, all boys and girls of outstanding ability who live within reach of secondary schools, and whose parents cannot afford to pay the fees, should be educated free. The savings resulting from the first step will far more than cover the cost of the second.

Thirdly, all parents and local bodies should be invited to enter boys for a Government boarding-school, to be built in some healthy locality, far from any town, with ample opportunities for recreation; especially swimming, which is the form of exercise best suited to the tropics, and often the only one available in the rainy season. The ordinary fees should be fixed so as to cover the whole cost; but in the case of exceptionally clever boys whose parents cannot afford the fees, and who do not live within reach of a suitable school, the local body should be invited to pay the cost wholly or in part. If the list is full, preference should be given first to candidates from local bodies, and secondly to candidates from places where there is no suitable school. As soon as a sufficient number of guarantees has been obtained, the school should be built, and should

be followed by other schools. The first experiment should be with an anglo-vernacular secondary school for boys, as that is the most likely to be a financial success. But the principle can be applied to every kind of school. For instance, primary vernacular boarding-schools could be set up for children living in rural areas where no efficient school of any sort is available. These, of course, should have the simplest possible outfit. Chairs and benches and high desks, bedsteads and dormitories are all superfluous, and the children should learn, sleep, and eat as much as possible in the open air. In this way provision could gradually be made for all children throughout the country whose parents are willing and able to pay a moderate sum for their education, or who have exceptional intelligence. Financial difficulties would disappear, as no school would be opened without guarantees which would make it self-supporting. There would also be a solution of the chief difficulty in rural education, that of getting together in one place a sufficient number of children to fill the various standards in the school. Even if the experiment fails, nothing would be lost by it; and if even one primary or secondary boarding-school is opened, it will be all to the good. Success, on the other hand, will remove the present reproach; will enable every village child, however poor and however far from any school, to obtain a first-rate education if he has sufficient intelligence; will make it possible for well-to-do cultivators to have their children properly educated without sending them to a town; will unearth ability all over the country, and make it available for the service of the community; and will provide a body of picked men and women of high intelligence who could be trained as teachers at no greater cost than is now incurred in training the leavings of a small section of the nation. And all these results can be achieved without any increase in the total public expenditure on education.

There is a common delusion, from which some educationists are not altogether free, that it is possible to turn people into intelligent teachers, administrators, organizers, or members of the professions by educating them. It is

not possible. Education never made anyone intelligent. All that it can do is to equip intelligence with knowledge, and so enable it to be put to a good use and to come into its own.

I once told an English missionary who was a most admirable teacher that the clerks who came from his school (the only one teaching English in the town where I was stationed) were the stupidest I had known in Burma. He looked hurt, till I explained that I was really paying a compliment to his teaching. No one else could have got so many incompetents through the examinations which qualified for a Government clerkship. His good teaching had not raised the standard of intelligence in my office. On the contrary, it had lowered it. But for him my office would have been filled with clerks from other towns, worse taught and therefore (since they had passed the same examination) more intelligent.

The Education Department in Burma has not attempted to equip with knowledge the most intelligent of the people. What it has done is to equip, or attempt to equip, with knowledge the children of a tiny group of people who happened to have money or to live in Rangoon. As a result we have a handful of Burmans who are both educated and intelligent, a great many who are educated but not intelligent, and a great many more who are intelligent but not educated. In Burma there is an almost entire absence of classes with hereditary ability. If such exists, it is at least as likely to be found among the descendants of generations of village headmen, who seldom have any chance of higher education, as among the inhabitants of the towns. It is impossible in any case that eight million people should not contain many times the number of intelligent individuals as are contained in a hundred thousand. Public money which is now wasted could be spent on them to good purpose.

So far I have said nothing about university education. This is a monopoly of the people of Rangoon and a few rich individuals outside. Burma has not many rich men, and in Rangoon itself less than a third of the people is Burmese. The result is that, while Burma is the most literate province

of the Indian Empire, and has also, with the exception of the Panjab, the largest number of scholars at secondary schools in proportion to her population, she ranks last of all the great provinces in attendance at arts colleges. Even Lower Burma, which has been British for seventy years, has a smaller number of university students in proportion to its population than Bengal, Bombay, Madras, or the Panjab. Population, wealth, and intelligence are all much more diffused in Burma than in the other provinces, and the educational machinery, which has been imported from India, is quite unsuited to her needs. It is not necessary to go farther in order to explain the backwardness of Burma in the higher education. The lack of men of first-rate ability, now that Burmans are called to high places in the Government, is painfully obvious, and may seem surprising in so intelligent a race. But the supply cannot be increased by inducing a larger number of rich men's sons and of the population of Rangoon to enter the university. That would produce more educated men, but not more men of ability. The only way to get more men of ability for the administration is to seek them out up and down the country, and to educate them at the public expense.

84742

## CHAPTER VI

# RELIGION

ANY Burman will tell you that Buddhism is the only religion of the Burmese. A person who is not a Buddhist is not regarded as a Burman. Yet, though Buddhism plays the most important part in the lives of the people, there is another religion which influences most of them in varying degrees. That religion is animism, or the worship of spirits. It is the ancient religion of the people.

In most countries the old religion has been incorporated in the new. In southern Europe, for instance, ancient gods have been turned into saints under other names. In Tibet a "debased" form of Buddhism is practised. Even in the purer form brought into Burma from India, some of the Hindu gods—the sky-god and the earth-god for instance —have been retained, though relegated to a comparatively unimportant place. I suspect, too, that the Buddhist saint Upagupta, whose image is put out in the sun by way of punishment during a drought, was a rain-god before he was a saint. But on the whole Buddhism is maintained in its purity as a godless religion, a system of philosophy and ethics, with an ascetic order of monks who influence the people by their conduct as much as by their teaching; while the desire of mankind for gods is satisfied by the other religion, which is frowned on by Buddhist teachers and is observed more or less secretly and shamefacedly, but which, nevertheless, has its festivals attended by many thousands of professing Buddhists.

Some writer once remarked that Buddhism was a veneer overlying a solid structure of animism, and the statement

has since been repeated in gazetteers and census reports and other publications till it has become almost a commonplace. Yet I can find no justification for it. If it refers to outward observances, there is hardly any country where religion is so much in evidence as Buddhism is in Burma. The repetition of texts at pagodas and monasteries—there is at least one of each in nearly every village—goes on incessantly, and other manifestations of Buddhism are to be seen almost daily. Animistic observances, on the other hand, have to be sought out, and many Europeans hardly suspect their existence.

If the influence of religion on conduct is meant, I do not think the assertion can be any better justified. It is always difficult to say how far a people's conduct is affected by its religion. The common assumption that all good acts, ethically considered, are due to religious influences, and all bad ones done in spite of them, is clearly untenable. But in the case of Burmese Buddhism the monks are probably as strict in their observances as any large religious body in the world, and compare very favourably with those of other Buddhist countries. Most laymen, too, obey the prohibitions against alcohol and the taking of life, and these run counter both to strong human instincts and to animist practice. The suppression of these habits, while animistic beliefs remain and in some respects order the Burman's daily life, is a proof of the reality of Buddhist influence. Ethical teaching, indeed, has no part in animism, whereas in Buddhism it occupies an important place.

It has been shown in Chapter II (p. 18) how easily and completely the Nagas adopt the Burmese civilization when they settle in the plains. The reader will have noticed that the civilizing influence is the monastery school. There are no Buddhist missions supported with large funds for the conversion of the heathen; but there are wandering monks, ready to live in any village which will give them food and shelter and a small boy or two to live with them and attend to their wants. These boys, and others who come from home every day for lessons, are taught a new language, a new religion, new manners, and a new way of

living; and, as this new way of living is simple and suited to their needs and environment, they bring up their families in it when they grow up, and even supplement the monastery school with lay-schools for both boys and girls.

But the soil must be suitable, or the seed will not grow. Buddhism has failed in India. The great Buddhist empire of the early centuries of the Christian era has vanished, and the Brahman caste has regained its supremacy, or yielded it to fighting Muhammadans. Probably Buddhism never spread among the people of India as it has spread in Burma. It was, we may suppose, a religion of courts and princes, imposed on the people from above. It has even been suggested, though proof is wanting, that the rulers of the Buddhist empire were at least in part of Mongolian origin, and that when they fell their religion went with them.

Buddhism is not a cheerful religion. The vanity of life, the illusiveness of pleasure, are its constant refrain. Happiness, except the happiness that comes from renunciation, is not contemplated either in the present life or in the future. It is a sin to wish for any other kind of happiness. It is a sin to desire a life after death. The aim of a saint is not to serve his fellow-men (except by inducing them to become like himself), but to cease to exist,[1] in this world or any other. Death is no escape from the sorrows of life, for it is merely a renewal of existence. One can only cease to exist by abandoning all desire for life.

But the religion of a people is what the people make it. No doubt the Burman honestly thinks that he believes in the teaching I have described; yet he somehow manages to get more enjoyment out of religious observances than anyone else does. There could be no better cure for a fit of the blues than a Buddhist festival in Burma. The springless bullock-carts, packed tight with young men and

[1] In the ordinary sense of the word, at any rate. K. J. Saunders (*Epochs in Buddhist History*) calls Nibbāna "the extinction of the process of becoming" (p. 17). There are mystical explanations, varying with different schools, distinguishing this from simple annihilation. The Buddha himself seems to have regarded such discussions as a waste of time. Most of this paragraph is based on Rhys Davids' *Early Buddhism*.

girls, racing against one another over the plain, every bump calling forth peals of laughter; the poorest of the crowd dressed in clean bright clothes with at least one piece of silk; merry family parties climbing hand in hand up the long flights of steps which lead to the sacred buildings; even the rapidly intoned texts, with their accompaniments of tinkling bells and silver high-toned gongs: such scenes make one forget that Buddhism is in theory one of the gloomiest of religions. Not that there is any irreverence. While the party is performing its religious duties the most mischievous maid is at least outwardly serious, and the tiniest mite does his best to look solemn like his elders, though circumstances may sometimes be too much for him.

Buddhist monks are so far from being a separate caste that every Burman boy must, if only for a few hours, wear the yellow robe and submit himself to monastery discipline, which includes at least a show of begging[1] one's food and entire abstention from eating after midday. The ceremony of initiation is an elaborate one. The boy is first taken in procession round the town, gaily dressed and mounted on a pony, which should be a white one. On his return the saint Upagupta (p. 109) is asked to keep the evil spirits from him, and with the same object he is sprinkled with water by means of a sprig of the bay-tree, his hands are washed in water in which bay-leaves have been steeped, and a white thread is tied on his wrist, while all the time sacred texts are uttered in a loud voice. The bay-tree brings good luck; and until he has put on the yellow robe the boy is in great danger from evil spirits, who are jealous at seeing him about to go out of their power. Various delicacies are then offered to him, and if accepted are placed in his mouth, for he must do nothing himself. Music and dancing and a dramatic performance follow. After he has thus taken his fill of worldly pleasures, his hair is cut, his

[1] This word conveys the right impression, but is not strictly accurate, as the monks do not ask for food. They go past the houses carrying large bowls. The people come out of their houses with food, which they place in the bowl, and the monk passes on without thanks or recognition of any kind.

head is shaved, and his bright attire is stripped off him and replaced by the coarse yellow robe of a mendicant.

These ceremonies take a whole day. At one stage of them offerings are made to the monks, one of whom preaches a sermon for the boy's benefit. I listened to such a sermon when, about 1896, the grandson of the Kinwun Mindyi, King Thibaw's last prime minister, entered a monastery. The service, as we should call it in the Christian church, was held in the minister's house, a big wooden building, long since demolished, within the city walls. In a large hall, dark at the sides and lit only from an opening in the middle of the roof, there sat in the gloom against the walls a long line of yellow-robed monks, holding before them their yellow palm-leaf fans. In front of them were numerous presents in which the same colour prevailed, so that the effect of the whole was a dark tawny yellow. In the centre, with a broad beam of light falling on them from the opening in the roof, were two kneeling figures: one the aged minister, robed in white, with a white fillet and glistening white hair on his bowed head; the other the boy, wearing gorgeous coloured silks and flashing gems. A deep voice came out of the darkness, expounding the law. It was one of the most beautiful scenes I have ever witnessed.

The country contains about seventy thousand monks, and less than eight thousand nuns. The comparatively small number of nuns is perhaps to be accounted for by their uniform. Though, as in other countries, the women are far more religious than the men, their devotion seldom goes to the length of their appearing in public, as a Burmese nun must do, in a robe of dirty white, with bald uncovered head.

The funeral of a monk or higher dignitary of the Buddhist church is made the occasion of a festival of the kind held on the death of laymen, but on a more magnificent scale. The coffin is placed high up on an immense car, over which is a gorgeous canopy, rising tier upon tier, of bamboo and coloured paper, often very artistically designed. Over the coffin is a richly embroidered pall. The corpse is cremated, and the car serves as a funeral pyre. At the cremation

TYING THE SACRED THREAD

IN THE ORDER OF THE YELLOW ROBE

of the head of the Buddhist Church in Mandalay, which I saw about 1896, there were many of these cars, and the bier rested on each one in turn. The base of each car was decorated with paintings, some representing Buddhist legends, others, like that described on p. 41, scenes of a nature anything but religious. On the same occasion a tug-of-war was arranged between bodies of men in ancient uniforms representing the armies of two kings who, according to one tradition, fought for the remains of the Buddha after his death. At another cremation I took part in a tug-of-war in which the public joined—hundreds of men, women, and children on each side, hauling at cane ropes, as thick as my arm, one of which was attached to each end of the car on which the body rested. The contest went on for an hour or more, for whenever one side began to give way it was reinforced by the bystanders. The trick was to pass the word along quietly and get a sudden pull on the rope, taking the other side unawares and starting the heavy car. Once started it was difficult to stop, but the onlookers, throwing themselves on the rope, generally succeeded in checking it; and so the fun went on, till at length one side got the car fairly on the run and dragged it to the end of the ground.

The proceedings end with the burning of the car and its contents. At Akyab, about 1892, I saw this done by means of rockets, which were fixed so as to run along ropes attached to the pyre and extended for hundreds of yards in different directions from it. There was one rope for each quarter of the town, and each in turn fired a rocket along its rope. Many rockets struck the pyre without igniting it. When at length it burst into flame the people of the quarter which had discharged the successful rocket sent up a great roar of triumph.

The two great universal feasts of the year in Burma are the festival of water in April and the festival of fire in October. Neither seems to be Buddhist in origin, but both are accepted by the Buddhist religion, just as the Christian churches have accepted Christmas and Easter. One occurs at the beginning, the other at the end of the rainy season. As

the author of *The Golden Bough* shows, there can be no doubt that the purpose, though no longer the conscious purpose, of the water-festival is to bring rain. In Central Celebes the young people throw water at one another whenever there is a drought, with the avowed object of producing rain. In Burma they do so, without knowing the reason, at the dryest and hottest time of the year, when the rains are due.

The object of the fire-festival, which is held in October, is less clear. The time of the year suggests that it may be connected with a desire that the rains should cease and the sun resume sway; but the use of fire in annual celebrations is world-wide, and Sir James Frazer thinks that the main object of such rites is purification and the removal of evil influences.

It is fitting that the two festivals should be in sharp contrast to each other. While one is celebrated in blazing sunlight with noisy hilarity, the other is associated in my memory with scenes of peaceful beauty during the hours of darkness. I will try to describe some of these scenes.

I had gone early to bed in the Palaw courthouse, which is built on a spur over the winding river of that name in the Mergui District. I heard voices below, and looking out saw that the dark river had become alive with many hundreds of lights. These proved to be lamps or candles placed on tiny rafts and let loose in the stream. As they floated gently down with the tide they were formed into beautiful patterns, changing every moment, by the currents and eddies in the river. They approached each other or drifted apart, quickened in pace or lingered, hurried along in midstream or rested by the bank, as the currents took them; but whatever happened their movements were always graceful and fascinating to watch.

Again, at the other end of Burma, I climbed the ridge at Kălewa[1] on the Chindwin one clear October night, and saw myriads of tiny lights on the broad river, line intermingling with line and stretching away, as it seemed, into infinity. There were the same graceful curves and slowly

[1] See the lower of the two illustrations which face p. 14.

changing designs as before, but on a far greater scale, for one could see downstream for many miles.

Even the ordinary celebrations are not without beauty, as one strolls through a village after dark. Rows of fairy lamps and paper lanterns decorate every house, pagodas are outlined in fire, and fire-balloons leap into the sky, to be consumed at almost invisible heights or fall to earth in ribbons of flame.

I have said above that some of the Hindu gods have been imported into Burma with Buddhism. One of these is Vasundhara, the earth-goddess. The legend is that when Mara, the evil one, came before the Buddha on his throne, and challenged him to prove his right to it, Vasundhara sprang from the earth and, wringing out her hair, wet with pious libations, broke the hosts of Mara with the flood that came therefrom. The figure of the goddess wringing out her long hair is often to be seen on the carved walls of monasteries, and libations of water are offered to her at funerals, and on many other occasions at which monks are present. A still more important god is Sakra (pronounced in Burmese Thădya, with the stress on the syllable -dya), who has become a kind of Buddhist archangel, a king of the heavenly spirits called *dewa*, the Sanskrit *deva*. He disputed with a *brahma*, a being of a still higher order, and each wagered his head that he was right. The *brahma* lost, and somewhere in the heavens (for it could not be allowed to touch the earth) his head has ever since been held up by seven maidens in turn, each passing it to the next when weary. When the head is passed on, the new year begins on earth.[1] The Burmese new year coincides with the water-festival, already mentioned, and is a time of uproarious merriment.

As mentioned above, the saint Upagupta is also connected with rain-making. He is said in Burmese legend to have been compelled to remain naked as a punishment

[1] I have been unable to trace any of these legends in the mass of Indian mythology which has been translated into English. The story of Vasundhara, however, has been found by Mr. Duroiselle, Government Archæologist, in a Pali work extant in Cambodia and Siam, and is told by him in his annual report of 1923.

for having, when a boy, run off with the clothing of another boy who was bathing. Since then he has lived in the middle of a great lake. I made his acquaintance when travelling by launch in one of the broad estuaries of the Irrawaddy. A raft was floating unattended out to sea, and on boarding it I found two images of the saint, so thickly covered with gold that the features were partly obliterated. The images were believed to have been set adrift in Upper Burma, presumably with the object of inducing Upagupta to give the thirsty land good rains. It seemed a pity to let them be sunk at sea, but if I detained them, and a drought followed, I did not know what my position would be. I therefore contented myself with photographing the raft and one of the images.[1] The men on the raft in the photograph were villagers from the shore.

The reader will wonder, as I did, why these valuable images were not appropriated by some one on the way, and the gold melted down. Rifling of pagodas for the sake of treasure buried in them is common enough. I was told that though images of the Buddha might be stolen, no one would dare touch those of the saint. When I pointed out that there were many Indians along the river banks who had no respect for Buddhism, the reply was that their fear would be even greater than that of Buddhists. A saint who has control over the weather is not to be trifled with.

Readers of *The Golden Bough* may remember that during a drought at Palermo St. Joseph is treated in just the same way as Upagupta in Burma; that is, his image is placed in the sun and told that it will be kept there till rain falls. Such parallels are not uncommon. When I was in Japan I saw a mother take her baby to an image in one of the temples at Miyajima, stroke a part of its body where it had pain, and touch the image in the corresponding part. A few weeks later I saw a Russian mother make an exactly similar use of an ikon in Moscow.

When Buddhism was first introduced into Burma it was very much mixed up with snake-worship, as it still is in Tibet; and traces survive in dragon-embraced pagodas

[1] The photographs appeared in *Man* for October, 1908.

NĂGĂYON PAGODA AT MYITTHA, KYANKSÈ DISTRICT
(SHOWING INFLUENCE OF SNAKE-WORSHIP)

and in representations of a cobra's hood over the head of Buddha. King Nawyăta of Păgan, a contemporary of William the Conqueror, introduced a purer form of Buddhism from the Mons of the delta, who had obtained it from Ceylon and southern India. He repressed the older form with some violence. But in the more ancient capital of Tăgaung, situated on the Irrawaddy above Mandalay, and now but a small village, at least one form of snake-worship, now entirely divorced from Buddhism, has lingered to this day. In a wooden house near the river, buried deep in the ground, is a huge log, the upper part of which is carved into the semblance of a head measuring, with the headdress, over four feet in height, and covered with golf-leaf. The features are grotesque: bulging eyes, a long-bridged nose with exaggerated nostrils, a very short chin, and no mouth. Between the eyes are leaf-like ornaments suggestive of a dragon's crest, and there are conventional ears somewhat in the shape of tails. Once a year the doors of the shrine are thrown open, and adults permitted to see the image, if they dare to look, and make offerings to it. Children are not allowed to see it at any time, lest its grotesque features excite their laughter, and the god be offended. Men take off their shoes or dismount from their ponies when passing the shrine, and it is said that those who omit to do so are thrown violently to the ground, and vomit and sometimes die.

I had the greatest difficulty in finding anyone at Tăgaung to tell me the story of this forbidding image, and the headman's wife, who opened the shrine for me in her husband's absence, quaked with fear when I asked her. But at last a brave man was found, and this is the story he told.

Thădo Saw was king of Tăgaung, and his queen was Kin Saw U. From a knot in the foundation-post of their palace sprang a dragon, which took the form of a man; and he was loved by the queen, and slew her husband with a prick from his poisoned fang; and the king's brother Thădo Pya reigned in his stead, and took Kin Saw U to wife. But he also was slain by the dragon, and likewise all the rest of six brothers in turn. Then the ministers sought for a king, and sent out a magic car

to bring him. Now Kin Saw U had a son Pauk Tyaing, who was lost in the forest when a boy, and was brought up by others; and from his foster-parents he learnt these sayings: "To reach your end, travel. To attain wisdom, ask. To live long, watch." With this learning he set out in obedience to the first precept, and was met with the magic car, and taken to the palace, and offered the kingdom. But he bethought him of the second, and asked what had become of the former kings and husbands of Kin Saw U; and he heard that the reason of their death was unknown, but that each one had the mark of a single tooth upon him. Yet he took the kingdom, and Kin Saw U as his queen. Then the dragon came to him in the night to kill him, but he was awake and ready in accordance with the third precept, and slew the dragon with his sword. So the dragon became a *nat*, and is worshipped under the name of Bodawdyi, the Great Father.

The legend appears in another form in the Jewish book of Tobit. "In Ecbatane, a city of Media, Sara, the daughter of Raguel, was also reproached by her father's maids because that she had been married to seven husbands, whom Asmodeus, the evil spirit, had killed, before they had lain with her" (Tobit, iii. 7, 8). Pauk Tyaing's part is there played by Tobit's son Tobias, who, when advised by the angel Raphael to marry his cousin Sara, demurred on account of the death of his seven predecessors. Raphael told him to take the heart and liver of a fish and make a smoke with it on the ashes of perfume, "and the devil shall smell it, and flee away, and never come again any more" (v. 17). These instructions Tobias carried out with complete success. "The which smell when the evil spirit had smelled, he fled into the uttermost parts of Egypt, and the angel bound him" (viii. 3).

To me the native religion is more interesting than anything imported from India, however long ago, and the true Burmese god, or *nat*, seems to be a man who died a violent death and was thereupon raised to the godhead. If there are any indigenous nature-gods, they probably originated in this way. Even the ordinary nameless tree-spirit may very well be the ghost of someone who was murdered under the tree, just as with us a house may have the

A BUDDHIST NUN, PYAPON

SHWENÄBE, THE SNAKE WOMAN

reputation of being haunted by a ghost in consequence of some incident long since forgotten.

The place of honour must be given to Min Magăyi, the house-spirit. In every Burman house an offering is made to him at least once a year. In life he was Maung Tin Dè, a blacksmith who lived at the ancient city of Tăgaung, mentioned above, or at the still older capital of Tônngè near by. He was of such prodigious strength that when he struck his anvil the whole city shook: to the anger of the king, who ordered his arrest. Maung Tin Dè fled to the hills, but the king married his sister Saw Mè Ya, and thus induced him to return. Then he treacherously had him seized and burnt alive in a champac-tree. On this the queen threw herself into the flames, and became a *nat* with her brother. Thereafter their spirits abode in the tree, and devoured anyone who came near. So the tree was uprooted and thrown into the river; and it floated down to the royal city of Păgan, whose king gave the spirits a temple on the great lone mountain of Pôppa. An annual festival was held in their honour, and until the sixteenth century, when the practice was suppressed, oxen and buffaloes were sacrificed to them.

This story, too, is not unconnected with snake-worship. The snake-woman Shwenăbe, whom the doughty blacksmith met during his wanderings in the mountains, is also a *nat*. On his departure she laid two eggs, and dropped them in the river. From these came the Black and White Brothers, who boxed before the king of Prome till both died of exhaustion, and became *nats*.

More famous are the Brothers slain by King Nawyăta, the Buddhist proselytizer of the eleventh century mentioned above. They are said to have been the sons of an Indian adventurer (possibly an Arab) and an ogress who lived on Mount Pôppa. Through their mother they inherited magic powers. The pious king had ordered each of his subjects to contribute a brick to a pagoda which he built at Taungbyôn, near Mandalay. The Brothers failed to contribute their bricks, and were put to death. They became *nats*, and an annual festival, attended by thousands

of Burmans (all of them probably Buddhists) is still held in their honour. Their golden images are kept in a shrine close to the pagoda which was the occasion of their death. Here is enacted an elaborate ceremony, lasting several days. On the last day two branches of the coffeewort-tree, one for each brother, are set up near the shrine. The topmost twig of each is cut by a priest or priestess of the cult, and the crowd falls on the tree and tears it to pieces. The fragments are taken home and planted in the fields to bring a good harvest.

This ceremony is of extraordinary interest, not only because it has persisted, with wonderful vitality, in the teeth of the strongest condemnation from the teachers of the dominant religion, but because it suggests an origin for two of the most widespread of religious ideas,—those of tree-worship and of the divine victim. A coffeewort-tree may have happened to grow near or on the graves of the Brothers, and have been, in the belief of the people, impregnated with their virtue. The original tree may have been cut up and distributed, and when it failed a tree of the same kind, or a branch brought from the forest, may have been treated in the same way, as is done now. The sacrifice of human life has already taken place, once for all, and the tree is dismembered, not in substitution for a man, but because the virtue of this particular man has entered it.

It is not necessary to assume a single origin for any custom, and a custom may be continued for reasons altogether different from those which were the cause of its beginning. But it is a natural instinct in every man to hold on to a good thing when he has it. He is reluctant to believe that an individual who has been specially useful to the community during life can be of no further use after death, and in an agricultural community such an individual's most obvious function is to give good crops.

In all these cases the victims were killed, not as a conscious sacrifice, but to satisfy a despot's desire for vengeance. It was only after they were slain that their death acquired a religious significance. The principle of the

deliberate sacrifice of life for the good of the community is, however, plainly bound up with the old religion. Its practice still continues among the uncontrolled Nagas of the extreme north-west. A boy or girl is bought from a distant village and killed with much ceremony. The people bring the rice which they intend to use as seed, and sprinkle the victim's blood over it. Other Naga tribes, as will be seen in another chapter, collect heads, no doubt with the idea of propitiating their gods. In territory administered by our government beasts are substituted for men, and among Buddhists even this practice is extinct; but Buddhists in villages along the Chindwin still sacrifice fowls annually to the god of the harvest, though the thing is done somewhat surreptitiously and shamefacedly, and if inquiries are made from a villager he will very likely say that the practice exists in some other village but not in his. But every Burman offers food, including sometimes fish, but not meat, at least once a year to the Blacksmith, and here we have the principle of sacrifice in its most attenuated form.

Nor is human sacrifice so long extinct, even among Burman Buddhists. In the past no town was founded, and no great building erected, without the sacrifice of one or more human beings, whose death was believed to be necessary to the success of the work, and whose spirits afterwards guarded it. Even at the founding of Mandalay, in 1857, it was popularly believed that a pregnant woman was slain at night in order that her spirit might be guardian of the city, and the pious King Mindôn is said to have openly made offerings of fruit and food to the spirit, which was supposed to have taken the form of a snake. One of the gates of Kălemyo, in the Chindwin, is called the Koyin Gate, because a *koyin*, or acolyte, who happened to be passing, was seized and killed, and his body buried under it. There is a tradition that the architect of the Ananda Pagoda at Păgan, the finest in the country, sacrificed his own son to ensure the success of his work.

To Nawyăta, the great Buddhist king of the eleventh century, is given the credit of founding the extensive

irrigation-works in what is now Kyauksè District, to the south of Mandalay. According to the legend, a victim was about to be taken for each weir, when the sister of the Shan king of Myodyi, one of Nawyăta's queens, asked whether her death would not suffice for all. So she was slain, and at every weir was placed her likeness in a wooden figure overlaid with gold-leaf. The king of Myodyi himself had a tragic death. He regarded himself as the equal in rank of the great Burmese king, but when Nawyăta sent for him to render homage he sank his pride and started for Păgan rather than drag his people into war. When he reached the whirlpool in the Zawdyi River, where it enters Burma, he was so overcome with shame that he threw himself in and was drowned.

Though Christianity has made but little headway among the Burmese, it has not escaped them that it is founded on the idea of sacrifice. Perhaps this knowledge, added to the secrecy with which Freemason rites are performed, accounts for the almost universal belief that the Freemasons kidnap children and sacrifice them at their meetings. An intelligent Burman once told me that he did not believe the tales about this being done at every meeting, but that there was no doubt it took place at Christmas, at which season careful mothers did not let their children go out of their sight.

The eating of the god is a rite with which we are familiar in our churches, and we ought not to be surprised at finding traces of cannabalism among the Burmese. It is recorded in the *Gazetteer of Upper Burma and the Shan States* that when a rebel leader, who had been a monk and had a great name as a sorcerer, was killed, his body was dug up by a Shan chief (not, it is true, a Burman, but the Shans are as pious Buddhists as the Burmese) and the head and other parts of the body boiled down into a potent decoction, which the chief proposed to send to the Chief Commissioner. The Burmese legend of Tilat, still represented on the stage, tells how he was prompted by the spirit of Maung Min Dyaw, a victim of one of the kings of Păgan, to disembowel his pregnant wife and eat the unborn child,

NAWYĂTA'S QUEEN.

THE KING OF MYODYI

thus attaining the power of making himself invisible. In 1894, when I was at Bassein, a Burman was convicted of desecrating a grave in the town cemetery, and sentenced, I think, to imprisonment. He was found disinterring a corpse, no doubt with some such object as that above mentioned.

I have said above that one way of producing rain is to take the image of a Buddhist saint and leave it in the burning sun till rain comes; a method which is always, sooner or later, effective. The commonest device, however, is a tug-of-war, which is so well described by Dr. Francis Buchanan in *Asiatick Researches* for 1779 that I will ask leave to quote him.

In some of the *Burma* writings it is said, that when the sun is in the path of the goat, these *nat* do not chuse to leave their houses on account of the great heat, whence there is then no rain. For this reason, the inhabitants of the *Burma* Empire, in times of drought, are wont to assemble in great numbers, with drums and a long cable. Dividing themselves into two parties, with a vast shouting and noise, they drag the cable contrary ways, the one party endeavouring to get the better of the other: and they think, by this means, to invite the *nat* to come out from their houses, and to sport in the air. The thunder and lightning, which frequently precede rain, are the clashing and shining of the arms of these *nat*, who sometimes sport in mock-battles.

## CHAPTER VII

# THE DRAMA

I KNOW of no people in whom the dramatic instinct is so strong as it is in the Burmese. Even in remote parts of the country, where villages are small and scattered, a company of strolling players is almost sure to be found at some time in the dry season. Every important or unusual occasion—an entry into the monkhood, an ear-boring, a marriage, a funeral, a pagoda festival, a distant coronation, an official visit—is made an excuse for a dramatic performance. It might be said that the Burman is a born actor and mimic. I have never seen anything more amusing than a village entertainment at which two small boys burlesqued an Englishman (with whitened face) and his Indian servant (blackened from head to foot), the former throwing himself into a long chair and calling imperiously for a whisky and soda.

In the richer and more populous tracts of Lower Burma every small town now has its permanent theatre. But the national theatre is the open air, or a temporary shelter of bamboos and leaves erected for the occasion, and it is free to all. A selfish Burman, when he has saved a little money, spends it on religious works for the good of his soul; a generous one bears the cost of a play for the entertainment of his fellows. Such generosity, though it may make him popular, brings him no merit in the next existence. Rather the contrary, for among the simpler folk the play excites strong feelings and even anger as they weep with the heroine or execrate the doings of the villain, and such emotions are frowned on by the Buddhist religion.

An ordinary company of players may be hired, perhaps,

at three or four pounds for the night, but often the cost is much greater. In 1908 I witnessed a performance at Dedayè, a small town on the Irrawaddy, by a Mandalay troupe headed by the famous actor Maung Po Sein, who has probably broken as many girls' hearts as any man in Europe or America. The cost was £60 for three nights, and was borne by a trader on the occasion of his little son's initiation into the monkhood, a ceremony which, as we have seen, every male Buddhist must go through, even if he wears the yellow robe for only a few hours. A covered stage was erected in the dry rice-fields, and I estimated that seven thousand people watched the performance.

The real play seldom begins before midnight, and it goes on till dawn. The earlier hours of darkness, while the audience is collecting, are occupied with introductory matter arranged on unvarying lines and quite independent of the piece. Much of it is traditional. A Burman will tell you that it is only meant to amuse the children. These come, as a matter of course, with their elders, whole family parties settling down for the night with their bedding, which after all is only a light mat, easily rolled up and carried under the arm. After an overture from the band, a prayer is offered to the spirits of earth and heaven for the success of the play by a girl who acts as a medium or intercessor between gods and men. The prayer is followed by alternate hymns to the gods and dances. I have attempted to put into English the first part of a song of triumph which is chanted by an actor representing Sakra (Thădya), the god in whose honour the water-festival is held at the new year, as explained in the last chapter. Sujananda, Chitra, and Chittadhamma—the Burmese forms of these Sanskrit names are just recognizable in the song—are Sakra's principal queens, dwelling in Veyanta (Weyanda).

Blessed source of fourfold light,
Wondrous rays that reach to heaven,
To the joyful hosts divine!
On the crown of Mount Meru
In Weyanda,

Where Thuzananda,
Seitra, Seittadăma dwell,
Thousand and ten thousand queens:
There above all worlds enthroned
I, the Lord Thădya, receive
Worship from th' encircling throng.
Now into this world of mortals,
Delegate of all the gods,
I descend, on pleasure bent,
Where illustrious sons of men
Have prepared in merry measure
Dance and song for my delight.

Next to the gods, the king and his court. There is always a king of some sort in the old-fashioned Burmese play. When the songs and dances are over, the king's ministers assemble at the council-house and discuss affairs of state. They are followed by the royal pages, who discharge the functions of clowns, and are full of ancient jokes and modern "gag." After the comic interlude thus supplied, the pages are sent to fetch the maids of honour, and all go together to the palace to meet the king.

It is necessary to explain here how scene-changing is effected. There is no curtain, and little or no attempt at scenery. The throne, represented usually by the property-box, is on the stage all the time. The play advances continuously. A change of scene is indicated by the players moving in circles to music, or by their leaving the stage, which remains empty for a time while the band plays. Thus, when the ministers send the pages for the maids of honour, it is the ministers who leave the stage, while the pages remain and move in circles, dancing. The maids of honour then come on the stage to show that the pages have reached them. The ministers reappear, and they, the maids of honour, and the pages take places suitable to their stations. At last the king enters, and seating himself on the throne holds his court. He questions the prime minister, the mayor of the city, and perhaps other ministers regarding their departments.

So far there has been nothing to indicate to the audience

what drama is about to be presented to them. But now the real play begins. It is opened by the king himself announcing his name and that of his realm, or rather its capital. This may be a town in Burma—formerly, it will be remembered, divided into several kingdoms—or in one of the neighbouring countries.

The dialogue of the play proper is to a great extent impromptu. The actors may be told what to say by the stage-manager, or trainer, but more often they only learn the plot, and make up their speeches as the play proceeds. The songs are learnt by heart, but these, as will be seen, are not always connected with the play. The whole performance is thus a conventional framework filled in with music, songs, and more or less impromptu dialogue.

Comic interludes are used to relieve tragedy just as in the Shakespearian drama, but with less attempt at continuity. The professionals who play the part of clowns or jesters are often very amusing, and I know of no music-hall comedian in England who could compete in facial expression with some of those I have seen.

I have described the national drama as still acted in villages in Upper Burma. Many innovations have now been introduced in town companies.

There is another kind of performance in which the human actors are replaced, so far as the spectacle is concerned, by marionettes. These are elaborately dressed and skilfully worked with strings by the actors, who are out of sight. Performances of this kind are considered superior to the others by the Burmese, but Europeans generally find them less interesting.

It will be guessed from the above that Europeans seldom see a real play. They only witness the preliminaries, which are mostly unintelligible, or at any rate uninteresting, even to one with a fair command of the language. A hard-worked official, who rises at six in the morning, objects to being deprived of his night's sleep. I never sat through a play, and have seen but little of professional acting. Once when camping out I had myself called at 4 a.m. for the purpose, but the result was disappointing, the company

being a poor one. Fortunately I was able to study the subject at my own times, and to take photographs, two of which are here reproduced, owing to the discovery of a troupe of child-actors who used to play at pagoda-festivals at towns and villages on the Chindwin. They were little girls of ages ranging from eight to twelve, and were well trained by a broken-down Mandalay actor, from whom I obtained most of the information given in this chapter. They were not professionals. Some were at school, others sold daily in the village market. But their clever acting made them very popular, and I engaged them more than once for official entertainments; thereby obtaining the approbation of some dignified old gentlemen, headmen of distant villages, who were among the guests. They said they liked my company because the jokes were so much more proper than those of professional actors. I myself thought some of them rather indecent, but no doubt the comparison was just. The youngest child, whose name was Mo Thu, or Sky Maiden, had a keen sense of humour, and was appropriately given the comic parts. In the photograph facing p. 124 she is seen as a clown, stripped to the waist as clowns always are in Burmese plays. In that of a village school facing p. 90 she is the third from the right in the front row.

The older plays may be divided into three classes. In the first class the plot is taken from one of the Buddhist Jatakas, or birth-stories, of Indian origin. Indeed the Burmese word for a play, *zat*, is probably derived from *jāta*, the Pali word for a previous existence of the Buddha. The Jatakas were described by the late Professor Rhys Davids as the oldest and most important collection of folk-lore extant. They are stories purporting to be told by the Buddha of his previous existences. The second class relates to the life of the Buddha himself (rarely represented now on the stage) and his contemporaries. The third deals with Burmese legendary history, and in these plays may be traced the early adventures of the people and the struggle of Buddhism against other forms of worship.

To the first of these classes, the birth-stories, belongs the tale of

PRINCESS PĂDUMA AND THE ROBBER
(IN STUCCO ON WALL OF TEMPLE AT MINGIN, UPPER CHINDWIN)

### Paduma.

King Brahmadatta of Benares had seven sons, of whom the eldest was named Paduma. And he suspected them of plotting to kill him, and banished them all into the forest with their wives. After some days they were hungry, and the men took counsel together, and agreed that they should kill and eat each of their wives in turn, beginning with the youngest. So the youngest was killed, and divided into thirteen pieces, one for each of the seven brothers and one for each of the six women that remained; and the others ate each his piece, but Paduma kept his, and ate half of his wife's instead; and he did the same when the other women were killed, till there remained only his own wife. Then he pretended to kill her, and gave to his brothers the six portions that he had kept, so that they might have each seven pieces in accordance with the agreement; but he and his wife fled till they came to the river Ganges, where there was much wild fruit, and lived there in the forest. Now there came floating down the river on a raft a man without hands or feet; for he was a robber, and they had been cut off; and Paduma and his wife saw him, and brought him to land, and tended him for many days. After that the woman loved the robber more than her husband, and she pushed Paduma over a cliff; but he fell upon the back of an iguana, which carried him to Benares, and he became king after his father. The princess remained with the robber, and bore him about the country in a basket on her head; and she also came to Benares, and to the palace where her lord was king. And the king saw her, and reproved her for her unfaithfulness, and sent her away.

Paduma, it will be understood, was one of the previous incarnations of the Buddha. The story illustrates the virtue of a forgiving disposition.

The name Paduma is much the same in Sanskrit or Pali and in Burmese, but this is not the case with the other names, which I shall give as now pronounced in Burmese, with the Sanskrit originals in brackets.

To the same class, though it is less primitive, belongs the story of

### Wethandaya.

The king of Sidoktăya (Jetuttara) had a son, whose name was Wethandăya (Vessantara). This prince was so generous

that he gave away to the poor or to the Brahman priests all that he possessed, save his white elephant; on which the safety of the kingdom depended, for it could bring rain to a parched soil. Now there was a drought in the land of Kălinga, and certain Brahmans came from that country and asked for the elephant, that it might bring rain to their kingdom; and he gave it to them: whereat the people were angry, and demanded of the king that he should be banished. So he and his wife and their two little children went out into the forest. But there also a greedy priest came to Wethandăya, when his wife was far from him gathering the fruits of the forest, and asked him for his children. And the prince gave away his children also, and the Brahman took them, and sold them for a great price to the king, and feasted, and ate so much that he died.

The prince became the Buddha himself in his next existence, and the story serves at once to pillory priestly greed and to impress upon the people, by picturesque exaggeration, the virtue of openhandedness. There is similar exaggeration in the story of a just king of Burma, who forbade his people to clean their fingers, after chewing betel, on the posts of his palace. He was so just that, when one of his subjects pointed out to him that he had himself inadvertently broken his own regulation, he took a knife and cut off two fingers of his own hand.

In the second class—that of legends of the time of the Buddha—is the story of the good king

### Peinmathaya.

Peinmăthaya (Bimbisara) was king of the country of Magadha, and to him Queen Wedehi (Vaidehi) bore a son, who was called Azatăthat (Ajatasat). Now Peinmăthaya knew that Azatăthat when he came of age would rebel and kill his father; and he told Wedehi, who many times would have put the child to death, but the king prevented her. And he was kind to the boy; and when Azatăthat was in pain from a whitlow on his finger he took the finger in his mouth, and sucked it, and soothed him to sleep; nor when the whitlow burst would he withdraw it, lest he should wake him. But the prince when he came to manhood rebelled against his father, and gained the power, and threw the king into prison, and commanded him to be tortured to death.

THE GOOD KING PEINMĂTHAYA

Then the queen told Azatăthat of his father's forbearance to him when he was a child; and she also told him that his own wife was bearing him a son even as she spoke to him. So Azatăthat relented, and ordered that the old man be spared; but he was already dead. And Azatăthat went to see his son, but the earth opened and swallowed him as he went.

The photograph shows the king and queen on the throne, with Azatăthat and his wife below on their left. On their right is a clown.

The next play belongs to legendary Burmese history, and therefore falls into the third of the classes mentioned above. Its story is a sequel to that of the Dragon of Tăgaung told in the last chapter. It will be remembered that Queen Kin Saw U, after the dragon had disposed of six of her husbands, married her son Pauk Tyaing.

### Ma Be Da.

In the city of Tăgaung Kin Saw U was queen, and the king was Pauk Tyaing, who slew the dragon, her paramour. And they had two sons, whom the influence of the dragon caused to be born blind; and the one that was born first was called Măha Thambăwa, and the other was called Sula Thambăwa; for in the Pali language *maha* is great and *sula* (cula) little. And when they became of age, the ministers told the king that it was not meet that blind men should remain in the palace, and they advised him to send the young men away. And Măha Thambăwa and Sula Thambăwa pleaded with the king, and their mother also pleaded for them, that they should not be sent away; but the king hearkened to the words of his ministers. So a raft was made, and the young men were placed thereon, and food was given to them, and they were set adrift on the river. And when the raft had come to the neighbourhood of Mount Pôppa it caught on the bank, and while it rested an ogress stepped thereon from the shore, and would have stolen the food. But one of the young men heard her, and seized her wrist; and they would have killed her, but she promised to give them sight if they would let her go. And they did so, and their eyes were opened, and they could see. And they went on their way, and came to the place where is now the city of Prome. Now the queen Kin Saw U had a brother, a hermit,

who lived at that place; and a daughter was born to him of a doe, and was named Ma Be Da. Her he sent each day to the river to fetch water in a gourd; but the hole in the gourd was no bigger than could be made with a needle, and she was all the day filling it. But Măha Thambăwa and Sula Thambăwa saw her filling the gourd, and enlarged the hole for her, and she returned early to her father; who, when he heard the reason, sent for the youths, and knew they were his kin, and gave the elder his daughter in marriage. Thereafter Măha Thambăwa founded the city of Prome, and became king thereof, and his queen was Ma Be Da; and when he died his brother also took Ma Be Da to wife, and became king after him.

The last play which I shall give belongs to the period when Păgan was the capital of a kingdom. It represents a trial by ordeal.

PAUK TYAW.

Maung Saing loved Ma Ta Dyi, daughter of Po Shwe Thi, the chief of Pôppa, in the kingdom of Păgan; and she returned his love. But her father would not consent to their marriage, and they prepared to fly together in secret; and to that end he went to his village for means to support them on the journey. Now in the same region lived a robber, whose name was Pauk Tyaw; and the king had ordered his arrest, but none could take him. And he also loved Ma Ta Dyi, and coming up into her house at night declared his love; but she would have none of him. At which he was angry, and going away hid in a grove of plantains on the path to Maung Saing's village. So as she came past to meet her lover he slew her, and fled; and Maung Saing found the body, and wept upon it.

But Po Shwe Thi, when he knew that his daughter was gone, went in search of her, and found Maung Saing near her body; and he accused him of her death, and haled him before the king. And the king bade Po Shwe Thi call witnesses, but he had none, neither had Maung Saing any. So the king commanded that two lamps should be lit, one for each of the parties, and ordained that he whose lamp went out first should die.

Now Pauk Tyaw after the murder had fled to the king, and asked pardon for his offences; but of the murder he said nothing: and the king pardoned him, and made him mayor of the city. So when the chief of Pôppa accused Maung Saing the king bade Pauk Tyaw watch the lamps, and slay him whose lamp went

PANK TYAW THE ROBBER

out first. And the lamps were lit. But Ma Ta Dyi had become a spirit, and she knew of the king's command, that either her lover or her father should die; and she put out the lamps, so that both were extinguished together. So Pauk Tyaw reported to the king, who commanded that they should be relit; and again they were extinguished together by the spirit. Which hearing the king directed the mayor to bring the parties before him, and to light the lamps in his presence; but the third time it was the same as before. Then Ma Ta Dyi revealed herself to the king, and told him of Pauk Tyaw's wickedness, and of all that had been done. And the king dismissed Pauk Tyaw from his office,[1] and caused him to be taken to the graveyard, and there slain by the executioner. But Po Shwe Thi went to Maung Saing, and asked his forgiveness, and received him into his house as his own son.

The photograph shows the scene in which the king himself, sitting on the throne, watches the lamps. Maung Saing is to his left, his long hair falling over his shoulders, and beyond him is Pauk Tyaw, still carrying the sword of state but looking rather uncomfortable. On the king's right stands the ghost of Ma Ta Dyi, who is supposed to be invisible. She wears leaves in her hair to show that she is a spirit, and carries in each hand foliage with which she will presently extinguish the lamps. Next to her are Po Shwe Thi and a minister.

Burmese plays are more or less of an operatic nature. The orchestra performs without intermission, except when the actors are speaking their parts. Europeans find it noisy and sometimes cacophonous, but Burmese music seems to be as highly developed as any system in the world outside that of the western peoples. The principal instrument consists of eighteen drums of different sizes ranged in a circle round the performer, who beats them with his hands and tunes them from time to time with a mixture of boiled rice and wood-ash applied wet to the middle of each drumhead. There are also five larger drums, a circle of brass gongs, a kind of primitive clarionet, and cymbals. Bamboo clappers are used to mark the time. At ceremonies performed

[1] See p. 61.

during the day the guests are sometimes entertained with extracts from plays accompanied by soft music, chiefly from a kind of harmonicon made of strips of bamboo.

The language of the songs is archaic in both structure and vocabulary. A man might have a thorough knowledge of modern Burmese without being able to understand a line of some of the best-known songs, and no dictionary yet written would be of any help to him. The ordinary Burman has only a vague idea of the sense, and it was with considerable difficulty that I was able to get at the meaning of a number of songs with the aid of the broken-down Mandalay actor already mentioned. Some of these were of great beauty, and, though little as yet is known of the subject, it seems probable that most of what is best worth preserving in Burmese literature is to be found in its songs.

Every actor has a repertory of songs, not necessarily belonging to any particular play, which he uses whenever they seem appropriate. Thus when a prince mourns the loss of a dear one he may use the song of which the following is a translation.

Hard is my lot, and unassuaged my yearning.
How have the gods ordained?
Distraught with sorrow on my gold-lacquered couch
Wildly I ask myself, Where is my love, my glorious jewel?
Is't in the round heaven,
Where the moon spreads her beams afar, afar,
Radiating,
Radiating over all,
Reaching into the dimness with shimmering waves?
Under a load of grief I reel and swoon,
Blinded, dazed, bowed down with sorrow,
With remembrance of my woe.

Here is one which shows some appreciation of the charm of a sub-tropical forest.

The place is dim and grey, the darkness spreads.
The feet of cloudland enter, the silver mists commingle.
Sweet-smelling zephyrs whirl and kiss each other,
And many a flower blossoms in the glades.

Clusters of lilies deck the way,
Clusters of scented lilies.
But that I yearn for is not,
And I am weary: yet 'tis sweet—
The woods, the driven mists on the hillsides—
'Tis wondrous sweet!

The last which I shall give is a favourite love-ditty. Thuza, or Thuzananda (Sujananda), has already been mentioned as one of the queens of heaven. Sadan is the name of a white elephant, one of the incarnations of the Buddha; and Zambu's Isle (Jambudipa) is the world we live in.

Little one, whose radiance fills
All the house with light:
Dainty form that daily thrills
Thy lover with delight!
Flashing black with emerald sheen
Like wing of humble-bee
Tresses trim that measure sure
Cubits more than three!
Pure thou art as gold refined;
Not one blemish thine.
Thuza's self is not more fair,
Nor Sadan's form divine.
Smooth limbs with beauty graced;
Swelling bosom, supple waist:
Not all Zambu's isle, I ween,
(Sister, I faint with love) can show
Searcht from end to end, a maiden
Fairer than my queen!

## CHAPTER VIII

# THE FAR NORTH—THE UPPER CHINDWIN

THE Upper Chindwin District, in the north-west corner of Burma, stretches through more than four degrees of latitude, or say the distance from London to Edinburgh; but in the far north its administration hardly extends beyond the banks of the Chindwin. Between this river and administered territory in Assam is country over which, though it is nominally part of the Indian Empire, we exercise no control. Even on the river our jurisdiction does not extend above the Falls, in lat. 26° 3′. Beyond this point no white man has ascended the river for over thirty years, and none, as far as is known, has ever crossed into Assam or from it, though the Assam railway is but half as far from the Falls as the headquarters of the Upper Chindwin District. Our officials are forbidden, for fear of complications, to set foot outside administered territory.

The unexplored country beyond the Falls appears to contain people in divers stages of civilization. Along the river, and on the plains to the east of it, there are said to be peaceful Shans with monasteries and schools, living side by side with fighting tribes of Kăchins, who despise work and live on their slaves. In the mountains to the west are wild Nagas.

In 1909, when I was Deputy Commissioner of the Upper Chindwin, the country beyond the Falls was ruled by a Kăchin chief, Lăsunkam, whose portrait faces this page. The Kăchins levied tribute on the Nagas, and sometimes made slaves of them, compelling them to follow Kăchin customs. The slaves were generally well treated, but from time to time some of them would cross into the territory of

LĂSUNKAM, OVERLORD OF THE TĂRO VALLEY

the Kanti Sawbwa, a Shan chief who, under the control of the Deputy Commissioner, ruled over the northernmost part of the district as far as the Falls. Lăsunkam demanded their return, but the Sawbwa refused, knowing that the British Government would support his refusal. At last Lăsunkam and his men made a midnight descent on a village which had been formed by runaway slaves near Kanti, the Sawbwa's headquarters, and carried off about a hundred people. The Sawbwa reported to me, and under orders of Government I wrote to Lăsunkam suggesting that he should meet me on a certain date at the Porpoise Pool, below the Falls, and discuss the matter. On my arrival there by Government launch I found Lăsunkam and a number of his followers on the bank. I invited him on board, but he declined to come, and I talked to him (through an interpreter who knew Burmese and Kăchin) from the bow of the launch while he sat on shore. He seemed much aggrieved by the Sawbwa's refusal to return his slaves, and claimed that he had a right to take back his own property. I explained that the British Government did not recognize property in slaves, and asked him when he would return them. After some parley he promised to return them all by a certain date. I then went ashore, and moved among his followers, including some Nagas from the mountains whose photographs face the next page. I afterwards heard that the bushes which may be seen in the background of the lower photograph were full of armed men, ready to rush out on us if any attempt was made to seize their chief. Lăsunkam, as I expected, kept his word, and the captives were all returned except a few who preferred to stay with their old masters. I saw and photographed some of the girls after their return. They had no complaints to make of their treatment by the raiders.

Among Lăsunkam's followers was the Naga chief of Lasa, who is shown in the upper photograph wearing a red cane helmet ornamented with boars' tusks. On another occasion a native of Kanti, who had often been at Lasa, gave me a detailed description of a religious ceremony which he had seen performed at this and neighbouring villages. A boy or girl, usually bought from another village, was sacrificed with

revolting barbarities at the annual festival in August in honour of the village god. The primary object was to obtain good crops, and the blood was poured over the rice reserved for use as seed. The victim was not killed at once. He was taken from house to house, and a finger-joint cut off at each. Then, at a post in the centre of the village, he was stabbed repeatedly at long intervals. The blood from each wound was smeared on the people, especially on the relations of the person who had bought him. The more he screamed the better, as the god would hear. The priest who performed the sacrifice held office for life. A condition of his appointment was that he should have no relatives living.

To the south-west of these villages, towards Manipur, are other tribes of Nagas, who sacrifice a buffalo or a *mithan* in place of a human being. The *mithan* is a curious animal, neither buffalo nor ox, but something between the two. He is barely tamed, and is kept only for sacrifices and feasts. The men of the southernmost tribes, living east of Manipur, are called by the Burmese "crested", from their fashion of wearing the hair like a crest or coxcomb at the top of the head. Both men and women go entirely naked in their villages, despite the great height—over six thousand feet in one known instance—at which they are built. When visiting riverine villages the men wear a sash tied round the waist with a loose end hanging in front. Among their weapons is a gigantic spear or pike twenty feet long. While I was in the district Chins from the south, also uncontrolled by us, were gradually subduing them. The Chins had firearms, whereas the Nagas had only bows, spears, and axes. Since then the whole of this country has been brought under our rule.

Between this tract and the country where human sacrifices are offered are other tribes of Nagas, called "lotus-leaf" by the Burmese from their fashion of shaving the head at the back and sides, leaving only some short hair floating, as it were, like a lotus-leaf at the top. The dress of the men is exiguous, but more decent than that of the "crested" Nagas. It consists of a piece of cotton cloth from three to four inches wide and a foot long, with a tape attached. The

NAGA CHIEF OF LASA

LÄSUNKAM AND HIS FOLLOWERS AT PORPOISE POOL

tape is passed between the legs and tied round the waist so as to secure the piece of cloth, the upper part of which is embroidered and falls over in a flap. When on the warpath the men add a light cotton shawl crossed over the chest, a helmet of cane with a plume of feathers or crest of goat's hair dyed red, close-fitting gaiters of red and white cane, and a covering of similar material for the forearm. Their weapons are a powerful cross-bow, a light spear, which may be either thrust or thrown, and an axe, carried on the buttocks in a wooden sheath. They show their affection for their parents by smoking their bodies for some months after death over the family hearth.

Some of these Nagas live round the slopes of Saramati, a mountain which has never been ascended by a European, but is estimated to be over 12,500 feet. There is a legend that a party of Nagas once attempted the ascent, but only two of them returned. These two had lost their fingers and toes, which had been bitten off by the angry spirit of the mountain. The spirit is worshipped by the Tămans and others in the neighbourhood. The upper part of Saramati is bare of vegetation, and composed of some kind of red rock. It was usually white with snow, but the snows had melted when I saw it, from a height across the river at sunrise, on an October morning in 1910—a symmetrical dome rising fiery red from the dark forest-clad range.

All these Nagas are head-hunters. That is, they collect as many human heads as possible and keep them in a shrine near the chief's house for the honour of their village and their god. They are ardent patriots, who believe that war between villages is and always will be unavoidable. They have no faith in village leagues, and resent any limitation of village sovereignty. They would not attack a friendly village or kill a harmless wayfarer without reason. They are not murderers, and there must always be some good ground for killing. But it seems there is seldom much difficulty in finding such a ground, provided the village they attack is sufficiently weak. The fact that someone in the other village killed one of their own people a generation or two back, and that the murder has not been avenged, is quite

enough. Nor is it at all necessary to take only men's heads. The Nagas say that anyone can lie in wait for a man in the forest and spear him as he comes along the narrow path, but it needs both craft and daring to get inside a stockaded village and bring back the head of a baby.

There are some Nagas, however, who have deliberately surrendered their independence and moved into territory administered by the British Government. The village of Nongmo, four miles from the Chindwin on the banks of its tributary the Nantălek, was formed in this way from Sengkădong, which lay farther up the Nantălek valley south of Saramati. Nongmo was perched on a steep hill just inside the administrative boundary. It was surrounded by a strong stockade, with bamboo *chevaux de frise* and heavy wooden doors at its two gates. One gate was on the north side, at the head of a winding path leading to the river below, and another on the south, towards the clearings where rice was grown for the support of the village. These defences were necessary, as there were tribes of Naga head-hunters at no great distance in territory unadministered by us. But there was a police-post at Tămanthi within a few miles, and with this and their stockade no doubt the people thought themselves safe from raiders. If they went down to the Chindwin, and lived among the Tămans, there was another danger to be feared; for Tămanthi is very malarial, and they would soon have been carried off by fever like so many other hillmen who come down to the plains. Besides, they still retained their own language, religion, and customs, and could hardly mix with the more civilized Tămans. The process of Burmanization had hardly yet begun.

On the 6th February, 1910, two Tămans came to the village, and stayed the night there. At daybreak, when most of the men had already gone off to work on their clearings to the south of the village, the strangers left by the north gate. Accustomed, perhaps, to more peaceful conditions, they omitted to warn the villagers that they were leaving, so that the massive doors might be swung to and barred behind them. Outside, in the path leading down to the river, they met a party of raiders coming up. They were men from

NAGA GIRLS TAKEN CAPTIVE BY LĂSUNKAM

Măkware, a Naga village several long days' marches away to the north of Saramati. They were in full war-dress, with spears, axes, and shields. Long ago, as I learnt afterwards, the great-aunt of one of the Măkwares had been murdered by a man of Sengkădong, the village from which the Nongmo people had moved. That was the excuse for the raid. The real reason, I was told, was that Măkware, a growing village, was able to display somewhat fewer heads than Tangmong, its neighbour and former suzerain. Tangmong had sixty heads, and Măkware only forty-eight. Also, no doubt, its leaders thought that Nongmo was too weak to take reprisals, and that the Power whose protection it had sought would not trouble to punish a village so remote and inaccessible as Măkware.

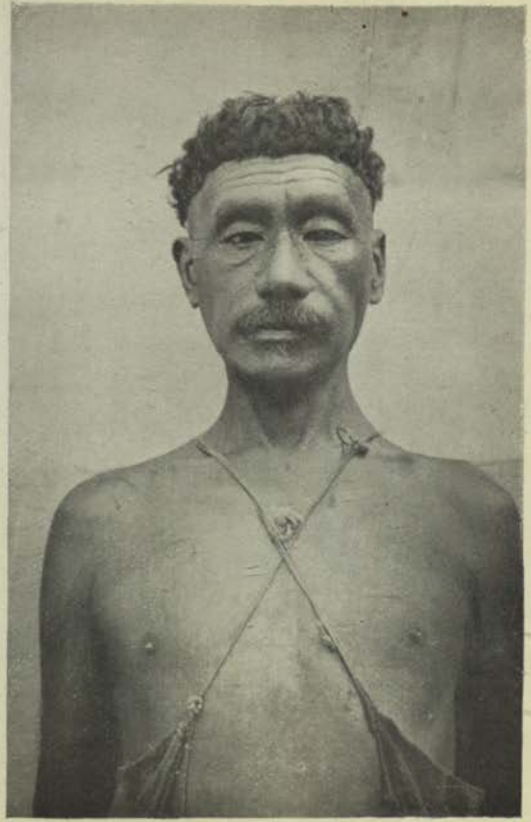
The Tămans did not die without a fight. One of them cut off the hand of a Măkware before he fell, mortally wounded, down the steep bank into the river. His body was carried away by the flood. The other was beheaded with an axe. The raiders numbered over a score. Leaving the headless trunk on the path, they rushed through the open gate into the village, where they killed all that were unable to escape. Mashatwö, the headman, described the scene to me. He was one of the few men left in the village. His elder wife ran screaming towards him with a spear thrust through her arm and body. A Măkware aimed a blow at his neck with an axe, but he eluded it. He defended himself with a spear, and his assailant turned his attention to easier game. Then he escaped by the south gate, and crouched in the bushes while the raiders finished their work. Soon all was silent, and Măshatwö returned. He saw first the headless corpses of two young girls in the village street. In a house he found seven others, including his lesser wife and her baby. With them were a man and his mother, a boy of nine, and two other infants. Just outside the house was the corpse of a girl of seventeen. In all thirteen heads were taken. Thus Măkware had one more head to its credit than Tangmong.

The raiders hindered immediate pursuit in the usual way, with poisoned spikes of bamboo cunningly hidden in

tufts of grass along the path. But some of them, including the man who had lost his hand, were seen on their return by the people of a Naga village five marches away; and later in the year the murders were avenged. A force of military police marched from the Chindwin round Saramati and met another force from Manipur. Under the command of an officer from Assam they advanced together on Măkware, and, as the stronghold did not surrender when called upon to do so, a volley was fired into the village. The women and children had already been removed to safety. The Măkwares fled, leaving several dead and three prisoners, who were brought down to Kindat and lodged in the jail there. One of them, whose portrait faces this page, had eight rudely executed figures of men tattooed on his body. It is customary for a Naga brave, in this tribe at least, to have a human figure tattooed on him for every person he has killed.

It would be a mistake to suppose that the Nagas, apart from the cruel practices dictated by their religion, are a bloodthirsty or a brutal people. Those who have become Buddhists are, as we have seen, gentle and law-abiding, and crime is almost unknown among them. What I have seen of those who are still savages accords with the estimate of a former Deputy Commissioner of the Naga Hills. "As a people they are neither insolent nor cringing, and if they think they are wronged by any order they will say so plainly. It is these qualities of frankness, cheerfulness, hospitality, and obedience which have endeared them to all those officers who have been stationed among them long enough to obtain a knowledge of them and their ways."

MĂSHATWÖ
HOLDING AN AXE SIMILAR TO THAT WITH WHICH HIS WIVES AND CHILDREN WERE DECAPITATED



A MĂKWARE LEADER

## CHAPTER IX

# THE FAR SOUTH

THE Mergui District is the southernmost part of Burma, and lies along the upper part of the long arm which separates the Bay of Bengal from the Gulf of Siam. Like the Chindwin, it deserves to have a chapter to itself; for it is of peculiar interest, whether we consider its scenery, its history, or its people.

Part of the district is an archipelago of over eight hundred islands. Some of these lie near the mouths of rivers, in muddy waters teeming with fish, and on them are many villages of Burmese fisher-folk; built on dry land where any is available near the water, but more often on lofty bamboo platforms. I found it difficult to make my way over these flimsy structures without going through the numerous holes, but babies toddled and naked urchins scampered across them regardless of the crocodiles lying on the mud far below, or swimming lazily past with a wicked eye turned towards a possible meal. The people make light of the danger from these beasts, and much amusement was caused by a panic among Europeans when a crocodile put up his head between the goal-posts during a game of water-polo; but that victims are sometimes claimed was proved on cutting open a monster brought to me at Mergui for reward. Inside him was found quite a little collection of rings and bracelets.

Many of these islands are encircled by dark mangrove forests, and mud flats, and brown waters that even the brilliance of a tropical sun cannot make other than dismal. But far out to sea, and along those parts of the coast where there are no rivers, the scenery changes. Here the water is so clear that I have been able to see every shell and pebble

of the sea-bottom at a measured depth of a hundred feet. The limbs of a bather gliding below the surface reflect the sun as if he were swimming in air. In these seas are large islands, on which are mountain ranges resounding with the cries of monkey and deer; hilly islets wooded down to their white sandy beaches; fir-covered reefs, where cone and sea-shell intermingle; and bare limestone rocks rising sheer out of the water for hundreds of feet.

Of these limestone rocks one group is called the Marble Isles, because composed of a coarse marble of a kind suited for building; black where exposed to the air, but showing white with a faint pink flush when a piece is sawn off. One of them is nearly a thousand feet in height. Rowing round it at high water, I could see nothing but lofty perpendicular cliffs. But I visited it again at low tide, and found on one side a tunnel, just large enough to allow a boat and its occupants to pass. Gliding through this, the boat emerged on a placid lake, so deep that the lead which we carried found no bottom, and black with the reflection of the cliffs which rose sheer out of it on every side but one. Opposite the tunnel by which we had entered was a small beach at the mouth of a cave. Leaving the boat and entering the cave, I found myself in an immense dark gallery, along which I walked for about a quarter of a mile, passing a fresh-water spring. The gallery grew smaller, and at last a glimmer of light appeared. This came from a hole on the far side of the island, so small that it had escaped my notice when I explored it from the outside. It was well above the highest tide, and inaccessible from the water. It would be hard to imagine a more ideal base for pirates than this island, lying on the sheltered route from Rangoon to Penang, with its entrance sunk below the sea for the greater part of every twelve hours, its invisible exit, accessible only from within, its lake affording perfect safety for boats, its spacious cave, and its spring of fresh water. Nor were the pirates wanting. Piracy is said to have been common in these waters all through the Burmese occupation, and for some years after the British annexation.

In another cave, far out to sea towards the southern end

of the archipelago, I walked over yielding beds of guano through endless dark galleries hung with bats. From outside another, which it was not safe to enter, I watched the long green rollers pass the narrow mouth and sweep on into the darkness, till they burst in an echoing roar far within. But perhaps the most interesting cave of all is in the Birds' Nest Rocks in the north of the district, off Tavoy Island. Its lofty interior, dimly lit through natural windows high up in the walls of rock, reminds one of a Gothic cathedral. Entering by boat, and looking back, I could see the green transparent ground-swell breaking against the entrance,

Like light dissolved in star-showers thrown.

Inside the cave the sunshine was excluded from the surface of the water, and for some depth below it. But it was afternoon, and the slanting rays of the sun, easily piercing the clear water from without, fell on the rocky floor, carpeted with sea-anemones, some forty feet below, whence a blaze of colour met my eyes as I looked over the side of the boat in the dimness.

The Birds' Nest Rocks take their name from the nests of which the Chinese make soup. When I visited them the nests were only to be found adhering to the most inaccessible parts of the walls, sometimes at a height of a hundred feet or more. They are milk-white, and shaped like the half of a china cup. They are made, it is said, from the saliva of a species of swift, which sleeps in the cave at night. I saw no birds, and was told that they spent the day, when not at work, high up in the sky. The nests taken on the day of my first visit were valued at £200. The right to collect them is auctioned by the Government, and fetched then over £1,000 a year. There are three collections, the birds rebuilding the nests in the intervals. After the last collection they rebuild them once more, and are then left to rear their young in peace.

Lying flat in the bottom of the boat, I watched a Burman swinging high over my head at the end of a rope thrown round a pinnacle in the roof of the cave. He was armed with a long two-pronged fork. At each swing he came

nearer to the wall, till he was able to make a dab with the fork at a nest, invisible in the dim light to me far below. At a second or third attempt he secured it. His occupation was as dangerous as it looked. Some days before my visit one of the men had fallen. He struck a rock near the water, and was killed outright.

But I have said enough of caves, which to most people are associated with guides and boredom. My delight in the archipelago lay in its varied scenery, its healthful climate, its opportunities for the only kind of exercise really suited to the tropics, and its freedom from mosquitoes, sand-flies, horse-flies, flying ants, flying stink-bugs, flying dung-beetles, and all the other pests of a tropical climate.

After heavy work in a stifling office at headquarters it was a joy to get away on the *Mercury* (a hundred-foot sea-going launch built for the use of the district officer, and named after the frigate which took Mergui in 1824), and to make for the open sea, taking with me a load of files to be tackled in the launch's cool cabin. It was two hundred miles to Victoria Point, the headquarters of the southernmost sub-division, and as we did not usually run at night the voyage took at least two days. Dropping anchor off some island in the cool of the evening, I would swim ashore and go for a brisk walk along the clean sand, taking to the water again whenever I felt hot. No doubt there were risks. Crocodiles abounded in the muddy waters at the mouths of rivers, which I generally avoided; though I must admit that in my favourite bathing-place at Victoria Point a Burmese lad, an officer's servant, was seized by a crocodile and devoured after I left the district. The sharks, whether because they were a small breed or because they had plenty of natural food, were apparently harmless; at all events they were more than once seen by the men in my boat when I was swimming near it. But there was one paradise—the pearling-grounds about latitude 11°—where there were neither sharks nor crocodiles. Here the waters were clearest, and the sands whitest, and the scenery most varied and beautiful.

On the mainland some of the river valleys, with their

fruit orchards, rice-fields, and rubber plantations backed by wooded hills, are hardly less beautiful than the outer islands of the archipelago. But there are also vast areas of dismal swamp and almost impenetrable forest, inhabited only by wild beasts. The southernmost township is separated from the rest of the district by a forest belt some fifty miles wide. Communication is only by sea, and during the monsoon is often cut off altogether. One thinks of the retort of the envoy of the King of Golconda, in the seventeenth century, to a Siamese minister who rallied him on the smallness of his master's kingdom. "It was true," he said, "that his master's dominions were small, but they were inhabited by human beings; whereas the territories of his Siamese Majesty were for the most part peopled by monkeys".[1]

For most of its known history the present Mergui District has been part of Siam. It became a Burmese possession, not for the first time, after the invasion of Siam by Alaungpăya in 1760. The village of Tenasserim, beautifully placed at the confluence of the Great and Little Tenasserim Rivers, forty-four miles from the sea and from Mergui town, was once a famous city. For hundreds of years it was the gateway of the most direct route to the Far East, goods being brought to it by sea from India and the Persian Gulf to meet those borne overland from Siam and China. Its inhabitants are mentioned among the foreigners to be seen at Ormuz in 1442. Early in the sixteenth century it is described in the Voyages of Tristan d'Acunha as the first mart for spices in India, and Duarte Barbosa says its ships were to be seen at Cape Guardafui. It was famed for its elephants in the fifteenth century. Later, at various dates in 1682, five ships carrying in all fifty-one elephants are recorded as arriving from Tenasserim at Masulipatam, on the east coast of India. The site of the old elephant-mart, a large enclosure, was pointed out to me on one of my visits. Mergui, lying in a well-sheltered harbour at the mouth of the river, and now the chief town of the district, was the seaport for Tenasserim. It was confounded with Tenasserim by some of the earlier travellers,

[1] Crawford's *Embassy to Siam*, quoted by Anderson, *English Intercourse with Siam*, p. 233.

including the Venetian Nicolo di Conti, who visited it between 1425 and 1430; but it is mentioned by name as Mergi in the record of a voyage made in 1568 by another Venetian, Cesare dei Fedrici.

In the centre of Mergui town is a steep ridge on which stand the great pagoda, the public offices, and the houses of the chief officials. The busy town lies at one's feet, and one may look across the harbour to the wooded hills of the Isle of Pătaw, and far beyond them the blue mountains of King Island. The ridge and harbour are of special interest for Englishmen owing to the tragedy enacted here some two hundred and forty years ago. The story is told in Anderson's *English Intercourse with Siam*, from which I have drawn most of the information contained in the last paragraph; but as it is little known it may bear repeating here.

In 1687, when Mergui was under the Siamese king, it was the abode of many European traders,—English, French, Dutch, and Portuguese. Even the governor, Richard Burneby, was an Englishman, and so was the port-officer, Samuel White. All ignored the claim of the East India Company to a monopoly of trade in eastern seas. Other Englishmen commanded ships in the service of the King of Siam, who was carrying on a desultory war with Golconda; and one of these was alleged to have caused damage to the Company at its factories on the Madras coast. So the Company, with the concurrence of King James II, decided to make an end of the nest of "interlopers" and at the same time to seize Mergui as security for their claim against the King of Siam. The frigate *Curtana*, Captain Weltden, was sent to Mergui with a letter addressed to all the English there, requiring them to board the frigate and place themselves under the Company's orders, failing which they would be prosecuted as "interlopers and rebellious persons". Another letter, addressed to the King of Siam, informed him that the Company had sent two ships of war to "stop up" the port of Mergui until he should pay £65,000 compensation.

The English at Mergui at once agreed to obey the order addressed to them. The letter to the King of Siam was forwarded to him at Ayuthia, then the capital, and a truce of

sixty days declared pending receipt of a reply. During the truce the Siamese constructed defences in the river under White's supervision, for he had not yet resigned the King of Siam's service. Weltden destroyed the defences in White's absence, and seized his ship; but the two in some unexplained way became reconciled, and caroused together on the *Curtana*. Two days later White returned Weltden's hospitality on shore. As they were taking leave of each other on the wharf they were attacked by a mob of natives. A blow on the head left Weltden insensible. White escaped to the shipping, where Weltden joined him after recovering consciousness and wading in the darkness through the mud of the foreshore, so familiar to present residents. What happened in the town we do not know, save that of sixty Englishmen only three escaped. Burneby, the easy-going governor, was among the killed. Mergui fell into the hands of the French. They were driven out in the succeeding year, with some loss, by the Siamese, who retained control till the Burmese invasion some eighty years later.

Not only was Mergui politically within the borders of Siam, but its people were Siamese. Siamese is still the only language spoken in the south of the district. Near Mergui, which is in the northern half, the only language is Burmese; but it is spoken with many Siamese idioms, and the people are doubtless mainly Siamese by descent. When I was in Mergui an old Siamese couple came up from the south to visit their grandchildren. They met with a cold reception, were unable to make themselves understood, and returned. In the middle of the district, a hundred miles south of Mergui, the people speak a mixture of the two languages. The process of Burmanization is thus curiously different from that which we have observed farther north. There the other races forget their own languages and customs, and become indistinguishable from Burmans, in speech and everything else. I can only suppose the difference to be due to the process having been effected in the north by education in the monasteries, and in the south by conquest and adult intercourse. There are comparatively few monasteries in the Mergui district, and the Siamese monks do not

appear to interest themselves in education as do the Burmese members of the order.

None of the islands lying in clear waters are inhabited, save by roving Sălôns. The origin of this curious people is unknown. Their language is stated in a census report, I know not on what ground, to be related to the ancient Cham of Cambodia. They have a tradition that they came from the mainland, from which they were driven into the sea; and they call themselves Mawken, from two words said to mean in their language "drown" and "salt water". Physically they do not differ much in appearance from Malays. They wear no clothing of any kind. They are filthy in their habits, and all those I saw had some kind of skin-disease. Their boats are dug-outs rendered unsinkable, and large enough to accommodate a whole family, by the addition of bulwarks constructed out of the stem of a wild palm, bound together with cane and made watertight by a kind of resinous beeswax. So primitive are they that they have not learnt the use of nets, though they must often see them used by others. They catch large fish with spears, jumping on to them from the bow of a boat, so that the weight of the body drives the spear through the fish. They live in their boats, or on flimsy shelters on sandy beaches. They complain of giddiness when remaining long on shore. They flee at the approach of strangers. I was only able to see a family in its natural state by overtaking a boat on the open sea in the launch. On another occasion, near the Siamese part of the archipelago, we sighted a number of boats and gave chase; but their occupants, seeing that the launch was too fast for them, beached their boats on an island and fled to the hills, whence not even the shouts of a half-Sălôn boy in my crew, who knew their language, could induce them to come down. They trade only with a favoured few, usually Chinese, who have managed to gain their confidence, and who supply them with rice (and possibly liquor and opium) in exchange for green snails, sea-slugs, and such mother-of-pearl shells as can be found in waters not more than five fathoms deep. In deeper waters the mother-of-pearl is obtained with European diving apparatus by

Filipinos, Japanese, and others from Mergui. The sea-slugs are Chinese delicacies, and the snails are also sent to market. The snail-shells make a beautiful rainbow-tinted substitute for mother-of-pearl.

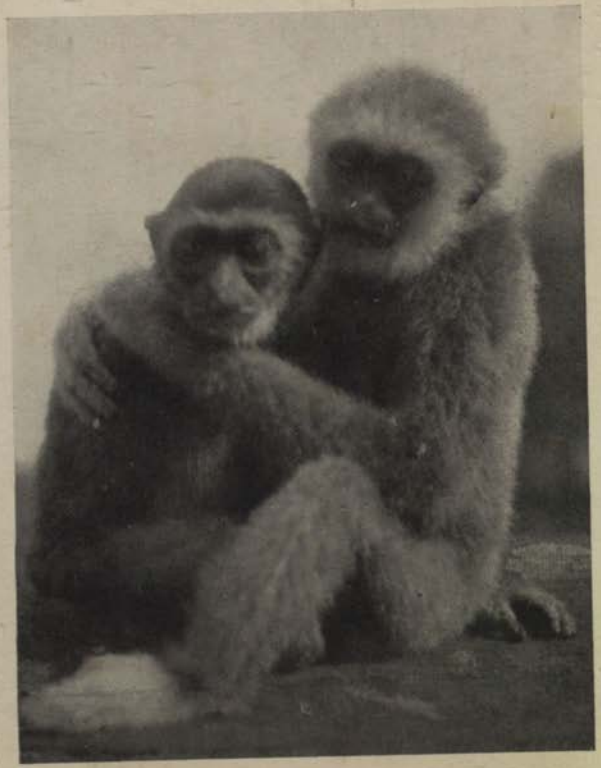
All the Sălôns, men, women, and children, are expert divers and swimmers. Some of the men are bold enough to take their boats to Mergui, where they put on a *lôndyi* as a partial concession to the customs of the inhabitants. Three of them appeared quite unexpectedly when I had arranged a swimming-race across the harbour from the head of Pătaw Island, a distance of about a mile. The Burman competitors protested, saying the Sălôns were fish; but as the competition was an open one the uncouth strangers could not be excluded. The Sălôns finished first, third, and fourth. A Burman with Indian blood, a very fine swimmer, was second, and was awarded a special prize. The winning Sălôn, whom I followed in a boat, had a curious style, possibly learnt from the fisher-monkey. His action was not unlike that of a dog; but he would swim half-a-dozen strokes with his body and head in a horizontal plane a foot or two below the surface, come up for breath, and sink again.

## CHAPTER X

## MY MENAGERIE

SOME ONE brought me a monkey, and some one else a deer, and I suppose the notion got abroad that I liked animals, for by degrees they came in from all parts of the Mergui district. There was a Malay bear cub, black with a white collar; affectionate in his way, but rather a nuisance, as he wanted to sit on my knee all the time, and bit me when I put him down. There were two mouse-deer, no bigger than a lap-dog, with incredibly slender legs. They soon disappeared, for I did not like confining my animals. So did the two tiger-kittens, more beautiful than any domestic breed, but fierce and untamable. There was a slow loris, a tiny animal with large round eyes and fur of exquisite softness; and a hornbill whom I called Mrs. Grundy, as she would put her head on one side and make sounds as if administering a severe rebuke. She was a great favourite about the house, till one day she went for a walk in the town and came back with a terrible bite from a dog, which led to her death.

My toddy-cat had a long pointed nose, but was otherwise much like an ordinary cat. He was useful for clearing the dinner-table of insects in the rainy season. He would gobble up several hundred without any apparent inconvenience to himself. But he was not popular among the other animals, as he had a trick of rushing at them and seizing them by the nose with his sharp teeth. When Mrs. Grundy arrived he tried the trick on her, and was greatly surprised when, in place of a soft nose, he encountered her enormous beak, some inches of which went down his throat. After it was extracted Mrs. Grundy, as usual, put her head on one side and solemnly reproved him.



MUHAMMAD KASIM AND OTHELLO

BILL

A tapir was once brought to Mergui for me, but was unfortunately drowned in the harbour before I saw him. A *sambhar* deer grew up in my compound into a fine animal some thirteen hands high. He roamed at will about the town, and was still doing so when I returned to Mergui ten years after leaving him there. He was very fond of sugar, and would come without warning and poke his nose over my shoulder for it as I sat at tea in the garden.

My first monkey was a brown gibbon. I named him Muhammad Kasim, after, I fear, an old Muhammadan in the town to whom his black wizened face, fringed with white beard and whiskers, gave him a ridiculous resemblance. He was a gentle and affectionate creature, and I was soon able to give him the run of the house; for he never did any mischief, and would even clamber on to the sideboard and walk in between the row of wine-glasses on the top shelf without knocking one over. His table manners were not perfect, but he would eat sliced plantains quite nicely with a fork, and before taking anything which he was not offered he would put out his hand slowly towards it, looking up into my face and uttering his plaintive cry, as if asking for permission. He would sometimes follow me to the court-house, balancing himself with his long arms and crying to me as he ran up the hill. Gibbons, according to my experience, never go on all fours, though they may rest their weight momentarily on their knuckles. He was joined later by Othello, a black monkey who adored him. Othello was only happy when clasping Muhammad in a firm embrace. Muhammad seemed to get bored sometimes, but he could not escape Othello's attentions, even when he fled to the top of the flagstaff in my compound. Othello would follow him there and resume his favourite position. Indeed when I was on tour the two often slept like this through a night of rain and storm at the masthead of my schooner, a position which one would think was very uncomfortable owing to the violence of the motion as the vessel rolled. When Muhammad died his companion only survived him a few hours.

Unlike Muhammad and Othello, Maung Su and Maung Pu had tails, and went on all fours. They were fisher-monkeys,

of the kind to be seen at low tide along the mud flats of the Pălaw River in the north of the district, carrying a stone in one hand and cracking with it the shell-fish they pick up. They were excellent swimmers and divers. Maung Su owed his capture to over-reliance on his power of remaining under water. Being accidentally separated from the herd, he made for the river, not realizing that my boat could follow him. He was very full of muddy water when at length he gave himself up, but not many minutes passed before we were friends. He was a perfect demon of mischief, and I had to keep him in the monkey-house, a side veranda closed in with trellis-work. When he escaped, as he sometimes did, his delight was to make for the pantry, collect all the spoons and forks and tuck them under one arm, swing himself to the topmost branch of the highest tree in the compound, and drop them one by one, eagerly watching them as they fell through the air. Another of his amusements was to watch for the pariah dogs that occasionally came into the compound from the street. If he saw one coming he would sit patiently, in perfect silence, on the long branch of a tree till the dog passed below it. Then he would drop like a stone on his back, and shake with laughter (or something very like it) as the terrified animal tore for the gate.

Maung Pu was short and fat, as his Burmese name implies. He was an even better swimmer than Maung Su, but had not his lightning movements on land. He had a comical way of sitting up opposite one, his fat paunch drawn as tight as a drum, looking the very incarnation of impudence, and making a sound which I can only describe as a chuckle. He, too, escaped once when the Sessions Judge was trying a man named On Pu for murder at the circuit-house, a few hundred yards away. The evidence had been taken, and On Pu was found guilty and sentenced to death. As the judge solemnly addressed the prisoner by name, Maung Pu, who had somehow got into the court and possibly thought he was being called (for his name sounded very like the prisoner's), quickly climbed on to the platform and thence to the judge's table, where he sat and chuckled at the judge and began to turn over the leaves of his judgment. His

removal was ordered, but Maung Pu was not easily caught; and one who was present described to me an exciting chase, round and round the court-room, by three gigantic Sikhs, armed with rifles and fixed bayonets, who formed part of the guard.

Compared with the fisher-monkeys Maung Ba, the coconut monkey, was but a dull animal, though my servants taught him to dance. His proper occupation was climbing trees and selecting coconuts, which he would pluck and throw down in obedience to signs made by his master.

But I think the most interesting of all my animals was Bill. He was a monkey of a somewhat rare kind, *Macacus arctoides*, called stumpy-tailed because his tail was a mere stump, an inch or so long, set on sideways. He was as big as a bull-terrier, and quite as muscular. I called him Bill because, in his gentler moments, he suggested a British working-man with his red face and thin brown beard, his deepset eyes and thoughtful expression, his slow movements and stolid demeanour, his strong shoulders bent as with constant toil, and his liking for beer. When he was angry his appearance changed altogether. He bared not only his teeth, but an enormous pair of fangs; his hair stood on end, and he uttered ear-piercing screams. He was not often like this, and I obtained the photograph facing p. 146 by sending for a Burman clerk for whom Bill had a peculiar dislike, and whom he had once chased into the cabin of the Government launch. The clerk saved himself by jumping through the window. I regret to say that, about the same time, Bill succeeded in biting a lascar of the launch before I could seize him by the throat. A scar on my hand still shows where his fang came into contact with it as he turned at me open-mouthed.

I had some anxious moments, too, when the Government chaplain visited Mergui on his rounds and came to my house. Bill was brought in at the end of a chain, and the chaplain, against my advice, drew his chair near him and patted him on the head. Bill gave him a glance and then, with unexpected quickness but characteristic determination, climbed up him and put his arm round the reverend gentleman's

neck. I had warned my friend that he would be attacked if he shrank from Bill or showed any sign of fear; and probably he never sat so still in his life as he did while I went to my pet (!) and coaxed him on to my own shoulder.

Bill's early history was unknown. He was presented to me by the Governor of Renong, a Siamese State separated from my district only by the Pakchan River. His limbs were cramped and stiff from long confinement in a small cage,—his punishment, it was rumoured, for grave offences, though I did not know this till much later. In my veranda he had roomy and comfortable quarters, and here he ruled over a diverse assemblage of his inferiors. He ruled, in spite of his slow movements and his companions' agility. They would snatch the old fellow's food from under his nose, and be at the other end of the long veranda in less time than he could move a yard. He never attempted to follow them, but would content himself with scolding. Sometimes he would take these and other outrages, such as tweaking his ear or startling him during a nap, in tolerably good part, but on one occasion when I was watching he became really angry over a more than usually outrageous prank of Maung Su's. Instantly Maung Su stopped in the middle of a wild flight, descended to where Bill sat, and humbly surrendered himself to his mercy, lying with his forehead on the ground. Bill gave him a good shaking, bumped his head on the stone flags, and let him go. Probably he got at least his fair share of the good things going. His companions doubtless recognized that he was immensely stronger than they, and that for all their activity he might some day catch them. And indeed his appearance when he was angry was terrifying enough to make the most inveterate practical joker careful not to go too far with him.

Perhaps it was a provision of nature for the defence of his kind, this faculty for assuming so formidable an aspect that one can imagine a panther slinking away in fear at the sight. For in spite of his powerful fangs and great strength, Bill was, it must be confessed, a coward. He would attack, if he could, anyone who showed fear of him; otherwise he was submissive enough, and my servants even went so far

as to wash him, though he evidently regarded the operation as cruel and insulting. He loathed dogs, and usually succeeded in scaring them away. But on one occasion he met more than his match in a fox-terrier, barely full-grown, whose bone he had stolen. On the dog approaching him, Bill assumed a frightful aspect as usual, and this succeeded so far that the terrier stopped, and retired when Bill advanced. But when the dog came on again Bill retired, and he always advanced less and retired farther than the other. At length the terrier mustered up courage and seized his enemy's ear. Bill instantly lay down and pretended to be dead; and the puppy, immensely pleased at having vanquished so formidable an adversary, ran to his master for admiration. While he was pre-occupied with his master's praise, Bill, who must have been watching him all the time, suddenly recovered his feet, seized the bone, and was in safety with it before the dog knew that he had lost the fruits of his victory.

Bill was certainly intelligent. He repeatedly escaped from the monkey-house, the door of which was secured with a chain tied in a knot. It was at first thought that some one had left the door open, or had tied the chain carelessly; but it was found that he could undo a double knot by working at it with his fingers. I had to get a padlock, for he sometimes made himself a nuisance during these escapades. Thus he crept into a room where I was interviewing a portly Burman official and suddenly pulled off his silk *lôndyi*, causing him to sit on the floor with astonishing swiftness. Worse still, he entered a Burman officer's house when the family had sat down to a meal, scattered them in all directions, and was about to eat their dinner when my servant secured him.

If my servants are to be believed, he invented a device for catching crows, which, as everyone knows who has lived in the East, are an intolerable nuisance. He placed a tit-bit just inside the trellis-work in the veranda, sat down beside it, and pretended to search himself for fleas.[1] When an unsuspecting crow put his head through one of the diamond-shaped

[1] Or rather, according to a letter in *The Observer* of February 27th, 1925, pieces of cast-off skin.

openings to reach the morsel, Bill's strong arm shot out behind him and dragged the wretched bird in. What followed will not bear narration. I could hardly believe that all the litter which I saw spread over the wide and long veranda came from what had been two crows. Probably the first had been caught by accident, but my servants insisted that Bill laid a deliberate trap for the second.

But there was a softer side to Bill's nature. A very small white kitten was placed in the veranda with a bowl of milk. She had hardly begun to lap the milk when the lesser monkeys came round her, pulled her off by the tail, and took her place at the bowl. Then Bill walked firmly up to them, seized each interloper in turn, bumped his head on the floor, and threw him far away. Without at first taking any of the milk himself, he sat over his new friend and watched her lapping till he thought it was time to join in.

Even a dog was not attacked by him if sufficiently helpless. A puppy, just able to crawl, was put into his travelling cage with him. Bill turned his back on him in disgust, but could not leave him owing to the confined space. It was amusing to see him edge away each time the puppy stumbled against him.

No form of alcohol came amiss to Bill, and he could drink as much as most men without showing any ill-effects. But he always knew when he had had enough, and then nothing would induce him to take any more.

He was particular about his food, and never ate anything without first smelling and then tasting it. If given an orange he peeled it, divided it into cloves, and carefully removed the thin skin from each clove with his fingers before eating it.

Bill accompanied me when I took the Mergui Volunteers to a camp of exercise on one of the uninhabited islands of the archipelago. He was let loose in the forest, to his obvious enjoyment. At first he returned for food, but his visits grew rarer, and at last ceased altogether. Evidently he had found plenty to eat in the forest, and I did not expect to see him again. When we broke up our camp he was searched for and called many times, but would not come, though he could be seen sitting high up on a distant tree. My boat was

the last to push off. As we rowed away Bill came out of the forest and ran down to the water's edge. Here he sat, doubtless expecting us to go back for him, but we rowed on towards the launch to see what he would do. I knew that he hated water, but was not then aware that he could not swim. At last we saw him enter the sea. He must have decided that it was better to be drowned than to be left on an island without human society. He waded in and, getting out of his depth, rolled from side to side in ludicrous ineffectual attempts to swim. He would have been drowned if we had not gone back and rescued him.

Poor old Bill! On my leaving for England on furlough he was sent to the Zoological Gardens in Rangoon. I heard later that he was not on good terms with his keeper. It must be admitted that he kept his finer qualities somewhat in the background. When I returned to Burma he was gone. No one knew what had become of him.

## CHAPTER XI

# A MAGISTRATE'S REMINISCENCES

ONE of my earliest recollections as a magistrate is spending eight days from early morning till sunset in the jail at Akyab, on the Bay of Bengal, inquiring into offences committed by the prisoners during an outbreak. There had been an unsuccessful rebellion in the district, led by a discontented headman and an expert swordsman named La Ba, who died fighting long afterwards. These two declared a foolish young man, a relation of the headman, to be king of Arakan, and published proclamations calling on the people to drive the filthy foreigners into the sea. The feeble pretender and his principal adherents, except La Ba, were soon captured without military aid, and confined in the jail pending their trial; but the boy was reputed to have supernatural powers, and a prophecy went about that he would come out of jail on a certain date and lead his followers to victory. He did actually leave the jail on that day, but only to stand his trial for murder.

The Civil Surgeon, who was also Superintendent of the Jail, had promised to call for me at my house that morning and take me round the jail workshops and sale-room, as I wanted some furniture. He was late, a fact to which we probably both owed our lives. I was waiting for him when I heard shots in the direction of the jail. My pony and trap were at the door, and I drove off to see what was the matter. At the jail gates I found the doctor's Indian assistant and a European merchant who happened to be passing. I learnt that the prisoners had attacked Nelson, the Scotch jailor, with their carpenters' and blacksmiths' tools when he was in one of the workshops, and that the Indian warder who was

with him had fled and given the alarm. None of the warders, though armed with rifles, dared go inside the jail without a European; they contented themselves with firing into the air from the watch-towers on the walls, and these were the shots I had heard. The Superintendent now arrived, and the three of us, with two warders, entered the prison with such arms as we could find. I was provided with a sword-bayonet, and wondered what I should do with it if attacked, for the handle was so small that I could not get a useful grip. We entered the nearer part of the jail enclosure, in which were various small brick buildings, including the cells for solitary confinement and the under-trial wards where the Pretender and his followers had been confined pending their trial. Not a prisoner was to be seen. We walked past the buildings, expecting the prisoners to rush out from behind them when we were well inside the enclosure, but we reached without incident the fifteen-foot wall which separated this part of the jail from the workshops. We then found that all the prisoners had assembled in the other part and locked themselves in. We sent for a battering-ram and a ladder. Meantime the Akyab Volunteers, composed of Europeans and Eurasians, were coming in with their rifles, and I took my place among them while the Superintendent of Police ascended the wall with a four-barrelled pistol. He saw Nelson, bound with cords and on his knees, his hands tied together in an attitude of supplication and his head streaming with blood, surrounded by a group of prisoners, among whom was the Pretender. "They're killing me, sir," said the doomed man to him. The Superintendent fired, killing one of the prisoners; but the only result was that the unfortunate jailor was dragged behind a buttress and there despatched with hammers.

We afterwards heard that the outbreak had occurred prematurely. If the original plan had been followed there seems no reason why it should have failed. It would have been easy, while La Ba was marching into the town with his men, for a few of the townspeople to seize the volunteers' rifles at the sergeant-instructor's house where they were kept, after which the town could have been raised and the jail

gates opened. Many of the Arakanese women and children had already been sent away from the town in expectation of a disturbance. The European community would have been without protection unless the native police sided with them and chose to fight for them. There were no troops in Arakan.

As things were, however, the prisoners were easily induced to surrender. For some nights most of the European and Eurasian women and children slept together in a public building under a guard, and the men, if they slept at all, did so with loaded firearms beside them. But the town remained quiet, and there was no further danger, though La Ba and his gang gave a good deal of trouble before they were surrounded and shot or captured.

A belief in witchcraft and magic is, of course, general in Burma. An old woman complained to a Burman Sub-divisional Magistrate that a man in her village had defamed her by calling her a witch, with the result that stones were thrown into her house. On being summoned to appear before the magistrate the accused admitted having used the words imputed to him, but maintained that they were true, and that he could prove the woman to be a witch. He said he would do this by putting a certain liquid into her eyes and into those of any other women the magistrate might call up, after which he would roast a whetstone over a fire. It would then be found that the complainant's eyes would smart, but not those of the others—unless they also were witches. The magistrate had had an English education, and used the English language for the records of his cases. He knew that English judges did not believe in witchcraft, but he apparently believed in it himself; for he referred the case to me for orders, asking whether the test should be applied. I pointed out to him that he must use his own judgment, adding that, even if this novel trial by ordeal could prove anything, it would be very easy for the accused to produce the effect he desired if he was allowed to apply the liquid himself. The warning had no effect. I will leave the magistrate to tell the rest of the story in the words of his own judgment.

"As the complainant agreed to be tested in the above-mentioned means, I fixed the 9th September, 1899, as the date on which the operation was to be carried out. A large number of people came to see the operation, but only one woman among them agreed to the operation being performed in company with the complainant, who gave her consent, and the operation was performed under my strict supervision on the open ground and in broad daylight. The drug was administered, first into the eyes of the outside woman and then into the eyes of the complainant, and the *kyaukpyin* [1] was roasted on the fire immediately after the drug had been administered. The complainant could not open her eyes for some time, and when she did she complained of smartness, and the tears rolled down in torrents and the eyes became red and somewhat swollen, while the other woman felt nothing of the sort, and her eyes retained their natural colours and no tears came down. The court cannot say whether the woman (complainant) is a witch or not, but the accused has proved to the satisfaction of the court that his predictions came to pass. The accused is therefore acquitted."

Some years before this a woman in the Bassein district brought me a petition in which she charged her next-door neighbour with the murder of her child. The child had smallpox, and her neighbour persisted in frying fish in oil in spite of her remonstrances. The child died, and her neighbour was therefore guilty of murder. Burmans believe that the smell of frying oil is dangerous to anyone who has fever, and fatal in a case of smallpox. The complainant admitted that the disease was produced by a Burman who went about the district inoculating children for a fee. Inoculation was the old Burmese remedy for smallpox, and inoculators were able to persuade the people to pay them to give the disease to their children rather than have them vaccinated by the Government vaccinator, who also travelled from village to village for the purpose. Vaccination was compulsory only in the towns.

I have already said that Burmese women who have too

[1] Whetstone.

scanty hair are accustomed to supplement it with false tails cut from other heads. This practice is not unknown among the men, judging from an amusing incident which occurred in my court at Mandalay a year or two after the last case.

A woman had lost her false hair, and accused a neighbour of stealing it and taking it to a pawnbroker, in whose possession it was found. The accused woman admitted having pawned the hair found with the pawnbroker, but said it was her own. It was produced in court by the police, and placed, as was customary, on the rail in front of my table. Below the rail sat an old Burman pleader, who conducted the defence. His hair was still black, though his face was wizened with age and he wore no headdress. He knew only his own language, but he had often amused me by his humour and cleverness in cross-examination and by the quickness with which he followed up one question by another to a lying witness, leaving no time for reflection. The complainant gave her evidence. She swore that the hair in court belonged to her. To me it looked just like any other black hair, but she professed to be able to identify it. The case turned on the identification by her and others, for as far as I remember there was no other evidence against the accused. Then the old pleader began his cross-examination. He asked the complainant whether she was quite certain that there was no other hair in Mandalay like hers. Yes, she was quite certain. On her oath? Yes, on her oath. As she spoke the old man put his hand to the back of his head, snatched the hair from the rail, made some passes with amazing swiftness, and there, on the rail, were two black tails instead of one! Then he asked the witness which of the two was hers. As he did so I saw that his own hair was loosened. The witness examined both the tails, and at length identified one of them as hers. "Sir," said the pleader, "that is my hair"; and he resumed his seat. I had no idea whether it was his hair or not, for I could see no difference between them, but the accused was discharged.

Perhaps it was this illustration of the value of practical tests in weighing evidence that prompted me to try an experiment in court some years later. A salt-boiler in the

Mergui district came to hospital with a wound on his head and his topknot in his pocket. His story was that while he was at work late at night at his shed in the salt-fields another worker, with whom he had a quarrel, looked in and invited him to come to a play. He refused, and the man, who was standing beside him, then aimed a blow at his head with an axe, cutting off his topknot, felled him with another blow which cut his head open, and disappeared into the darkness. He told his story in a straightforward manner, and it was supported by other evidence. The prosecution was unable to produce the weapon, but the complainant described it as a *kăpa*; and, as this is a local word for a kind of axe not used in other parts of Burma, a *kăpa* was brought into court. An ordinary axe has a hole in its head through which the wooden handle is passed. The *kăpa* is a simple wedge of iron or steel with a projecting piece at the back which is driven through the wooden handle—plainly a copy of a stone implement, and therefore a very primitive weapon. Stone axes, carefully fashioned with sharp edges, have been found in the district, and one which was brought to me is now in the British Museum.

The accused denied having been to the shed at all, and his advocate put up an ingenious defence. He contended that with such a clumsy weapon it was impossible to cut off a man's loose topknot unless the hair was held (which was not alleged), or rested against some other substance. He suggested that what really happened was that the complainant was lying asleep in the dark on the floor of his shed when some unknown person came in and aimed the two blows at him, slicing off the topknot against the wooden floor, and left the shed unrecognized. I was greatly impressed, and, turning to the European Inspector who was prosecuting, I asked him whether he thought it possible to cut off a man's topknot with the weapon in court. He admitted that he did not think it was. "Well", I said, "let us try". The topknot was in court. I fixed the lower part of it in the drawer of the table at which I sat, and invited the Inspector to see whether he could cut off the rest, which hung loose. He took the axe and cut at the hair

with it, an inch or two away from the drawer. To his astonishment and mine the axe went clean through, half the hair falling on the floor and the rest remaining wedged in the drawer. The accused was eventually convicted and sent to jail.

All the most dramatic trials that I can remember took place during my four years in the Mergui district. In Upper Burma there is comparatively little crime, and in the delta I seldom tried criminal cases after I received charge of a district. The work of a district officer is there so heavy that he is relieved of his usual duty of trying the more serious offences other than murders.

A Burman who belonged to the delta, but was living in Mergui, was brought before me on a charge of making false coin. The police had raided his house, and found some counterfeit coins and coining implements. The principal witness against him was an old Indian living in the house as his tenant. Another was his little son, a boy of nine or ten years, who had inherited good looks and winning manners from both parents. The man had, it appeared, been convicted some years before at his old home of some offence in connection with coining, and had removed to Mergui after serving a short term of imprisonment. The principal offender in that case, if I remember right, was a Buddhist monk, of whom he was a follower.

The charge before me broke down badly under cross-examination, and by degrees the true facts were elicited. The Indian had been making advances to the wife of the accused, apparently without success, while her husband was away. He first won over the child by giving him sweets and other presents, and thus enlisted him as his ally. The Burman's return interrupted his love-making, and he devised a plan for getting him out of the way. He knew of his former conviction, and perhaps knew also that when a man has once been in jail it is easy to get him convicted again. An attic in the house was unoccupied. Here he worked in secret—he had perhaps been a coiner himself—with the crucibles and moulds which were to get his rival into jail for a long term of years and place the woman in his power. He

ingeniously allowed the child to see these preparations, and persuaded him that his own father was responsible for them. When all was ready he informed the police. The result was two long trials, one of the Burman for counterfeiting coin and the other of the Indian for bringing a false charge. Coining is severely punished by the courts, and if the Burman had been convicted he would have been sentenced to seven years' imprisonment or transportation to the Andamans. This sentence was passed on his accuser. The elaborate cunning of his plot only made the case clearer against him.

False charges brought by Burmans are usually clumsy affairs which do not survive scrutiny by the police. There was something like an epidemic of such charges when I was in Mergui owing to the growing independence in love affairs of the young people, who had hitherto probably been less free here than in other parts of Burma. To induce a girl of under sixteen to leave the custody of her parents with a view to marriage is technically kidnapping, a criminal offence. Forcible abduction of a woman of any age for the same purpose is, of course, also punishable by law. When, therefore, a girl married or eloped with a young man without her parents' consent, they would report to the police, alleging that her age was under sixteen, or that she had been taken away against her will. The police would find the lovers and bring them back, the man under arrest; and sometimes the girl, restored to her parents' control, would be induced by them to give false evidence against him, alleging that she yielded to force. Many attempts had thus been made to make use of the police to recover rebellious daughters by means of false accusations, and to avenge outraged parental authority by getting undesirable suitors arrested and taken to the district jail. Though most of these cases did not reach the courts, it was necessary to put a stop to the practice, and in a particularly flagrant instance I ordered the prosecution of the parents. The false charges ceased, but, as will be seen, the desire for vengeance could be satisfied in other ways.

In a village a few miles distant from Mergui a girl of eighteen had eloped with the son of a neighbour. Her parents had intended her for someone else, probably an

older man who could offer greater material advantages. The young couple settled down in a village some twenty miles away, and were quite happy together.

The girl had a little sister of eleven, whom we will call Mè Tu. The boy also had a little sister, a year or two younger, whom we will call Yin Me. Yin Me was accustomed to tend her father's cattle in a certain field some way from the village. According to her account Mè Tu came up to her, and, without saying a word, thrust a knife into her belly and ran away. It happened that Yin Me was wearing a *lôndyi* which was much too big for her and was therefore, to shorten it, rolled up at the waist. To this she probably owed her life; for the knife, after passing through eight thicknesses of cloth, inflicted only a slight wound. The only other fact she had to tell was that a man whom she recognized as Mè Tu's big brother was watching from the branches of a tree at a considerable distance away. Mè Tu was arrested, and brought to me for trial. She stood in the dock erect and defiant, answering in a loud firm voice the questions put to her. She admitted having gone to the neighbourhood of the pasture with a knife, which, she said, had been given to her by her mother to cut the leaves of a certain plant which grew there; but she denied having seen Yin Me at all. She was clearly guilty of an attempt at murder, but the difficulty was to know what to do with her. A boy could have been whipped or sent to a reformatory, but whipping is not a punishment suitable for girls even if it were legal, and there are no girls' reformatories in Burma, offences among women being rare, and among young girls rarer still. She was plainly incited in some way by her mother, if not actually carrying out her instructions, but there was no proof against the woman. Yet it was necessary to take serious notice of an act which was only prevented by an accident from being murder. The child was therefore confined for three months in the female ward, otherwise empty, of the prison, a respectable woman from her village being paid to look after her.

The most wanton murder that ever came to my knowledge was committed at the cross-roads in the heart of Mergui

town as the crowds were returning from the sports held in honour of King Edward VII's coronation. A harmless old man was fatally stabbed without provocation by some unknown person, probably a youth who had been enjoying himself and had indulged overmuch in alcoholic liquor.

In another tragedy jealousy was presumably the motive, though the murderer was never discovered. One night a youth was courting a girl at her parents' house in one of the poorer quarters of the town, where the streets are dark and narrow and the walls of the houses are made of bamboo matting. He sat with his back against one wall of the house, and the girl sat facing him. Her parents, as is the custom, had discreetly retired to a back room, out of sight but within hearing. The girl was talking to her lover, not looking at his face, it seems, but with her eyes cast down. Suddenly she ceased, and held her breath, for she saw the point of a spear protruding from his belly. Someone had thrust a spear from outside the house through the mat wall and through the boy's body. He died almost immediately.

A strange crime, described with dramatic detail in my court, was committed on one of the islands of the archipelago lying in muddy waters off the vast tract of almost uninhabited forest mentioned on p. 141. None of the neighbouring islands were inhabited. The nearest village was a mining camp in the interior, many hours away by boat through dismal creeks and swampy forest. On the island was a small Burmese fishing community. One of the fishermen, who bore, I think, the name of Kasim, was a tall dark man, powerfully built and of a sullen and morose disposition. Kasim is an Indian name, and he was partly of Indian descent and a Muhammadan by religion, though in dress and other respects conforming to Burmese custom. He may have been descended from some Indian convict who had been sent to the district when Mergui was a penal settlement. He lived alone. So violent was his temper that the Burmans feared him, and one family after another left the island and settled elsewhere. This is easy to do where houses have to be rebuilt every few years, and the household goods can all be conveyed in the family boat.

At last only two people besides Kasim remained on the island. They were an old Burman, whom I shall call Tha Aung, and his ten-year-old daughter. Tha Aung's hair was already turning grey, and he was far inferior to Kasim in stature and strength, but not, as will be seen, in courage.

Kasim suspected that Tha Aung and his daughter would also quit the island. The thought of being left alone, or of having to seek some other village which might not be so easily bullied, no doubt enraged him. He had been drinking heavily for some time. The excise laws do not reach so remote a place, and he distilled his own liquor from rice with a couple of pots and a tin funnel.

As Tha Aung sat on a wooden platform, or cot, outside his house in the cool of the evening, Kasim came towards him, somewhat drunk, and armed with the heavy *da*, half chopper and half sword, which is at once the Burman's household knife and his defence against the wild beasts of the forest. He asked Tha Aung whether he was leaving like the rest. The old man replied, perhaps not over truthfully, that he had no intention of doing so. Kasim received the answer with incredulity. He sat down beside Tha Aung on the cot.

"Are you *da*-proof?" suddenly asked Kasim. Most Burmans believe in charms that render weapons harmless. If the charm fails to act there is always some good explanation.

"Yes, I am *da*-proof."

"Are you sure?"

"Quite sure."

Tha Aung knew, of course, only too well that he was at the ruffian's mercy, but thought it might be possible to bluff him. Kasim lifted his arm. The *da* descended on to Tha Aung's thigh, and cut deep into the flesh. He did not flinch. "Didn't that hurt?" asked Kasim. "Not a bit" was the answer.

Kasim swore. He was too drunk, apparently, to notice the blood that gushed from Tha Aung's thigh, or it may have been too dark. He said his *da* must be blunt, and he

would go and sharpen it; and he staggered off in the direction of his house.

The little girl now joined her father. They hid together in some bushes near by. From there, through the still evening air, they could hear the bully whetting his *da* on a stone.

Presently he came back. Not seeing Tha Aung, he entered the house, and they could hear him swearing and slashing about him. He searched the house inside and out, and its surroundings, but happily he overlooked the thicket where they were, and departed, vowing with foul oaths to kill Tha Aung when he next saw him.

For a long time the old man and his daughter crouched together in the darkness, fearing Kasim's return. At last Tha Aung thought it safe to move. His wound had become stiff and painful, but he was able to crawl to the boat, which lay in the water a little way off. The child pushed off, and paddled silently through the darkness, across the calm sea which separated them from the mainland and through the creeks towards the mining camp. Before dawn they met a boat coming down. Tha Aung was conveyed to the Government hospital, and Kasim was arrested and brought to trial. It was some years before he again had an opportunity of playing the village bully.

Many years ago, when inspecting a court, I found several records missing. The register showed the cases as still pending. The responsible clerk made a pretence of a search, and then fell on his knees and told me that the late judge, a Burman who had been transferred to another part of the province some weeks before, had taken them away with him. If I gave him leave, he said, he would go himself and recover them. It is a common practice of corrupt judges to defer judgment unduly in order to give the parties time to come to terms—not with each other, but with the judge. I suspected this judge of corruption on other grounds. It occurred to me that if I wrote to him he would almost certainly reply that he knew nothing of the matter and that the clerk must have done away with the records for some

reason of his own. So in justice to the clerk I granted the leave. The man returned in a few days with the records complete, including the judgments, which all bore dates prior to the judge's transfer; and a letter from the judge explaining that he had written them in his house and forgotten to take them to court for delivery, so that they accidentally got into his baggage and accompanied him to his new station.

I suspected that the judgments were only written after the clerk had asked him for the records, but thought there could be no proof of this, when my eye happened to fall on the printer's note at the foot of the form on which one of them was written. The note showed the date on which the form was printed, and that date was later than the date of the judgment!

When I was an Assistant Commissioner at Mandalay, I had to try one Maung Ba, an excise sergeant, for extortion. There was plenty of evidence against him, both direct and circumstantial. A number of witnesses had heard him demand money as a consideration for his suppressing some alleged breach of the excise laws, and another batch of witnesses had seen the money handed to him. Unfortunately they all broke down in cross-examination. Very likely the charge was true, but their evidence was not. It was clear, in fact, that none of them had been present on either occasion. Even the most hardened criminals do not usually commit extortion in the presence of numerous independent witnesses. And the circumstantial evidence was insufficient for a conviction.

I was sitting in a room of my house one Sunday afternoon, writing my judgment. I had stated the facts brought out by the evidence on both sides, given my reasons for disbelieving the witnesses for the prosecution, and was just about to write an order acquitting Maung Ba, when my head servant, already referred to in this book, came and said there were some Burmese ladies in the veranda who had come to see me. He thought they looked like princesses. I had occasionally received visits from members of the Burmese royal family, including Thibaw's chief queen, a

gentle and refined woman who had been under duress for most of his reign owing to the jealousy of the masterful Supăyalat. (See p. 12.) Such visitors, as well as the ex-ministers, some of whom were far from refined, were always given chairs; for ordinary Burmans a clean mat or rug was provided. I told my man to give the ladies chairs at once, and then went to see them. In the veranda was a middle-aged woman, exquisitely dressed in Burmese silks and flashing with gems; and with her, also exquisitely dressed, the prettiest Burmese girl I have ever seen. I talked to them for a time, and tried to find out who they were, but they evaded all my questions. So I returned to my room, called my man, and told him to ascertain. He came back almost at once, and said, with a sardonic smile, that the younger woman was Maung Ba's sister.

That this scoundrel, whom I strongly suspected to be guilty, should send his sister to me roused my anger; the thought that I was just about to acquit him made me furious. I rushed out from the room where I wrote into the dining-room. On the table was an enormous bouquet, brought by my visitors. I seized it, and hurled it at them through the open door. They ran like hares. Whether the girl was really Maung Ba's sister I cannot tell; I was told afterwards he had no sister. For aught I know the elder woman may have been a princess sent to influence me. But I went next day to Maung Ba's chief (the excise department was then under the Superintendent of Police), told him what had happened, and demanded Maung Ba's dismissal. He said that was quite easy, as I had acquitted in the teeth of the evidence. This was not quite the answer I expected, but my desire for vengeance was satisfied.

## CHAPTER XII

# RECENT EVENTS AND THE FUTURE

MUCH has happened since I left Burma seven years ago. There were then no political questions. In Lower Burma perhaps there never had been any, for even if the people did not welcome British rule as a means of deliverance from Burmese oppression, they at any rate acquiesced in it. In Upper Burma British rule had, after a long resistance, been accepted for many years, and the exiled king seems to have been simply forgotten. If there was any dislike of Europeans, it was skilfully concealed. I never met with greater courtesy than when I travelled unattended and was mistaken for a trader. At monasteries I was always welcomed. It is true that on one occasion, I think about 1908, when I was walking round the veranda of a large monastery in the delta unable to find anyone from whom I could ask permission to enter, a small boy came to me and asked me to remove my boots; but on my introducing myself to the presiding monk, and explaining that it was the custom of my people to remove, not our boots, but our hats, the ecclesiastic seemed quite satisfied. The incident was exceptional, and I attributed the monk's message, perhaps wrongly, not to any dislike of the English, or desire to take advantage of his position in order to humiliate a layman, but to ignorance of English customs resulting from a secluded life in a remote part of a delta district. But whether persons who were not Buddhists should remove their shoes in sacred places was then usually regarded as a question for themselves only; if they chose to risk damnation it was their look-out. Probably this is still the feeling of most Burman Buddhists.

I have been told, by one who is likely to know, that the political agitation against the British began, a few months after I left the country, with an attempt to prevent Europeans from visiting the platform of the Shwe Dăgôn pagoda without first removing their boots. The platform, which is several hundred yards in circumference, is one of the sights of the world. It contains innumerable shrines, many of them very beautiful, and is the best place in Rangoon for studying Burmese life. Paved with stone, it is usually very dirty, and is a resort of pariah dogs which nose and fight for food among the garbage. To walk barefooted in such a place would be for Europeans not only unpleasant, but dangerous.

As the shoe question has thus, probably by accident, acquired importance, it may be worth discussing here. Burmans who wear sandals always remove them, as a mark of respect, before entering a house or sacred precincts. Burmans who have taken to European shoes do not usually remove them on entering a house, but think it imperative to do so in or near a pagoda or shrine or on consecrated land. In India such shoes are only removed inside a sacred building, and not even then if a felt covering is available to put over them before entering. In Japan the modification of custom resulting from the introduction of European shoes is quite different. A Japanese would remove them before entering the humblest cottage in Japan, but not at sacred places unless the floor is clean. In Siam, where the mode of life is generally similar to that in Burma, I understand that European shoes are not removed at all, either in houses or at sacred places.

Thus the Burmese practice is more uncompromising and inconvenient than in any other country. It has not been made so, however, merely to annoy Europeans. In 1900, when on a long walk in Japan with my Burman servant, I turned off the road, with a number of Japanese who were wearing boots, to see a remarkable image of the Buddha. On my reaching the main road again I asked my servant, who was waiting for me, why he had not accompanied me. His answer was that he had boots on, that he could not visit

the shrine without taking them off, and that he was afraid he might keep me waiting if he did so. I pointed out that the Japanese did not remove their boots. He replied that their customs were different.

It is unfortunate, however, that the Burmans have not followed the example of the Siamese, their neighbours and co-religionists. Those Burmans who habitually wear European shoes and socks, including probably the trustees of the great pagoda themselves, must find it inconvenient to have to remove them when worshipping at the pagodas. Possibly it was just this inconvenience to himself that gave a Prome lawyer the idea of starting an agitation. Whatever his motive was, he certainly seized a good opportunity for embarrassing the Government. For it is a cardinal rule of British administration not only to respect all native religions, but to give religious organizations complete autonomy within the law at their places of worship. If, therefore, the guardians of Buddhist sacred places decided that European shoes were not to be worn there, the Government could not, consistently with its own principles, do anything but accept the decision. The agitators won the day, and Europeans who respect themselves or their health do not now visit the pagoda platform.

It is natural that the monks should dislike British rule. It stands for the spread of education, and the monks, like all religious bodies, fear that education not controlled by themselves will weaken religious belief. It is true that the British Government has done its best to use and strengthen the monastic schools; but the attempt failed, partly because the Buddhist church disproves the teaching of even such subjects as geography, partly because men with the educational qualifications of a lay teacher do not enter the church; and Burmans, in whom a desire to educate their children seems to be inherent, tend more and more to support the lay schools instead of the monks.

Accordingly we find the monks, in spite of the rule of their church that they should not take part in politics, very much to the fore in the political agitation of the last seven years. One of them, U Oktama, has twice been in jail.

He was sentenced in October 1924 to three years' imprisonment for exciting disaffection against the Government and bringing it into hatred and contempt. I gather from the magistrate's judgment that U Oktama had given a public address in which he said that the capitation-tax was the invention of an unjust British Government; that the members of the Government looked only to their own welfare; that there had never been such oppression by any foreign government as there was in Burma; and that the present governmental policy was intended to ruin the country. Speaking of a riot in Mandalay in which some Burman policemen were killed, he said that when the police really knew what the Government was like they would turn against the English guns. He then dealt with the movement for the separation of Burma from India, and said that Burma and India had been united from the earliest times, and that if the Indians had been as the English the Burmans would have been dead long ago.

The Mandalay riot was the result of ill-feeling between two political associations, of which one desired the political separation of Burma from India, while the other advocated support of agitators in India against the British. The actual collision occurred between members of the latter association and the police, who attempted to prevent a procession from passing the headquarters of the rival association. U Oktama was in the procession, though he took no part in the riot. Further trouble occurred when some monks addressed the crowd in Fytche Square (the Trafalgar Square of Rangoon) after U Oktama's conviction and the square was cleared by mounted police armed with long canes. Soon after this an American missionary and his wife were attacked and beaten by monks in a Rangoon street, and the missionary stabbed in the neck.

The agitation had been carried on in many parts of the country by local political associations, having for their professed object the revival of the Buddhist religion, and in particular abstention from meat and alcohol. It appears to have been directed especially against the village headmen, some of whom have been murdered, while many have lost

their authority. At first sight this seems a curious move, seeing that the headmen are, as I have shown, nearly always elected by the people, and are not Government officials. If, however, the object of the agitators is to make any government impossible, their tactics are perfectly sound, since the whole fabric of order rests upon the authority of the village headmen.

Burma was omitted from the Montagu-Chelmsford reform scheme, on the ground that its people had shown no desire for self-government. Naturally this resulted in their immediately finding spokesmen, who in 1918 were consulted by the Lieutenant-Governor in a series of informal conferences. The result was a scheme which differed in some important respects from those which were proposed for other provinces. It was vehemently opposed by the leaders of the agitation, mainly on the ground that it did not go so far in the direction of government by the natives of the country as the Indian schemes; and after a good deal of discussion Burma was brought into line with the rest of India.

The new scheme came into force in January 1923. Burma became a Governor's province, with an Executive Council of two (at present an Englishman and a Burman) appointed by the King. The Legislative Council, formerly nominated, has been greatly enlarged, and now consists of seventy-nine elected and twenty-four nominated members, of whom not more than fourteen, with the two members of the executive council, may be officials. The country is divided into rural and urban constituencies, for which any male British subject who has passed the age of twenty-five is eligible as a candidate; and every taxpayer, male or female, over eighteen has a vote,—a wider franchise than exists anywhere in India. There are two Burman Ministers, nominated by the Governor, for what are called the transferred subjects: municipal and other local government, public health, education, public works, agriculture, forests, excise, and some minor ones. These are administered by the Governor acting with the Minister in charge; other subjects by the Governor in Council. The Governor is

bound to consider the advice of his Ministers, but not to follow it. With certain exceptions, such as loan charges and the salaries of the higher officials, all provincial expenditure, in both reserved and transferred subjects, must be submitted to the vote of the Legislative Council. If the Council withholds its assent, the Governor still has the power of authorizing expenditure which he considers essential on a reserved subject, and even on a transferred subject in cases of emergency, where the expenditure is in his opinion necessary for the safety or tranquillity of the province or for the carrying on of any public department. At the same time the province has been granted financial and administrative autonomy over the transferred subjects and certain others, of which the most important are the administration of justice and of the land revenue, police, and prisons. It has also been empowered to raise loans.

One respect in which the scheme of 1918 differed from that eventually adopted was that, while anyone could be chosen to represent the towns on the Legislative Council, the rural constituencies were to be represented by local men, members of the District Councils and elected by them. At that time it was proposed that each village-tract should elect a representative to the Circle Board, which in turn would depute one of its members to the District Council. It was expected that the villagers would in most cases elect their natural representative, the headman; and this expectation was one of the grounds for opposing the scheme, as it was argued that the headmen were appointed by the Deputy Commissioner, and would not be likely to give an independent vote in the Council.

The Government might have met this objection at the time by making the headman's post purely elective for a term of years. But this would not have satisfied those who were in any case opposed to the representation of local interests by local men. The question was considered, but it was deemed "undesirable, in initiating reforms, to court disaster by putting too great a strain on existing institutions". Seeing that the headman is already in practice

elected, I do not think the risk would have been great, but it is easy to understand the objection. The leaders of the agitation did not ask for and did not want this democratic reform, and the Government took the line of least resistance.

As the electoral system for the legislative chamber is modelled on that of Great Britain, it may be well to consider here what the British constitution really is. The British constitution may be described, when working successfully as a two-party system, as a piece of political machinery whereby every government is subjected to constant and hostile criticism, overthrown in the course of a few months or years, and replaced by a new one formed by its chief opponent. Or it may be called a system of one-man rule, in which the ruler has established his right to rule by inciting the nation to destroy the government of his predecessor. This political machinery enables every important issue to be threshed out as in a court of law; the government of the day playing the part of defendant, and the House of Commons and the nation that of the jury. Only the House of Commons is a packed jury, most of its members having been selected for their will and power to destroy the previous government, now the accusers; and the nation can only give its verdict at long intervals.

It is constantly said that the business of the Opposition is to oppose, and it is recognized that it should do so by every means short of violence and falsehood. Even falsehood, though it may be condemned, is not punished unless it constitutes a libel on an individual, and hardly then if it relates to his public acts. If, within these limitations, the Opposition succeeds, as it often does, in bringing the Government into hatred and contempt, it is considered to have done its duty. This process of exciting hatred and contempt is carried on all the time—in Parliament, in the press, and on platforms all over the country; but an extra effort is made at elections. The candidates at these elections are put up for certain territorial areas, but it is not necessary for them to be in any way connected with those areas, and they are not chosen by the inhabitants. They are selected

by the caucuses of the opposing parties, and they are selected largely for their supposed ability, within the rules of the game, to bring the other party into hatred and contempt.

Under this system a government is prevented from becoming too autocratic. Its acts, especially those which are likely to be unpopular, are given full publicity. Its members are severely cross-examined upon them, and the facts, or something like the facts, conveyed by the newspapers into every home in the country. All alterations in the laws are subjected to a more or less searching criticism. The public interest is stimulated in matters of national concern. The leading critics of the Government, while spurred to more and more bitter opposition by the prospect of rich prizes in the event of success, are at the same time forced to consider their accusations carefully, lest they recoil on themselves when they take office. But all these are minor advantages. The real merit of the system, the peculiarity that makes it, whatever its drawbacks, one of the best that has ever been devised, is the fact that, long before the growing mass of vituperation and vilification has resulted in violence, the government disappears, so that there is nothing left to attack. Its place is taken by its accusers, and the agitation in the country dies down. The opponents of the Government become the defenders of the Government, the Opposition press the Government press, the Opposition candidates the Government candidates. Thus the new Government is overwhelmingly strong, until its strength is sapped, like its predecessor's, by constant attacks on it. But if it were going to be always in power hardly anyone would trouble to defend it, or would buy newspapers which favoured it (they would, indeed, be very dull), or would go to the expense of fighting constituencies for it without a chance of being elected. Its army of voluntary defenders would soon go to pieces, having been deprived of the prospect of having to fight its opponents when, as the result of a new campaign of criticism and abuse, they have become strong enough to challenge it with a hope of success. The forces of opposition would grow ever stronger and stronger, and

unless successfully repressed would at length break out in open rebellion.

The powers of the executive in the British constitution are not defined by law, and the Prime Minister, as its head, can do almost anything so long as he keeps within the ordinary law and has the support of his party, and his party a majority in the House of Commons. He can sometimes, indeed, secure the unwilling support of the House by his power to dissolve it and compel its members to fight for their seats at a general election. The executive power is shared by him and his ministers with a permanent civil service, filled by competitive examination. The Prime Minister might dismiss any of the members of the civil service in order to give their posts to his own followers, but his action would certainly be condemned by public opinion as unconstitutional, unless he had foreshadowed it before being put into power by a general election. As it is, there is a somewhat delicate balance of power between the ministers and the civil service. The service must loyally accept and enforce the decisions of the ministers; but the ministers have to depend on the service for their orders to be carried out, and must not strain its loyalty too far.

This system has so far worked well, as far as I know, only among the races of northern Europe. Its success depends on the Prime Minister making a moderate use of the almost unlimited powers entrusted to him, on there being no political interference with the civil service, and on the loyalty of the services to the government of the day. Another condition essential to its success is that a sufficient number of his opponents should unite under a single leader, so that the leader has a majority at his back when called upon to form a government. In most countries, however similar their constitution may be to the British, there is a tendency to form a number of groups under different leaders. Unless the Opposition is united by self-interest (as under the spoils system in America) or by the existence of a permanent executive, a successful two-party government is apparently only possible with a certain kind of temperament; a

temperament that is willing to substitute for the ambition of being first in a minor group that of playing a minor part in a more important group, and to compromise on lesser issues, however strongly one may feel about them, in order to forward a common cause.

There are various other forms of parliamentary government. Probably the most successful is that of Switzerland, where the executive officers, including the President, are all elected by the legislature for a term of years. The legislature also is elected for a fixed period. The ministers are not members of the legislature, but take part in debates and answer questions. There is no party system in the English sense, though there are parties. In practice the ministers are usually re-elected again and again until their voluntary retirement. The idea of public service is highly developed among the Swiss by their system of local government. I quote the following from Viscount Bryce's *Modern Democracies.*

"Among the modern democracies which are true democracies, Switzerland has the highest claim to be studied. It is the oldest, for it contains communities in which popular government dates farther back than it does anywhere else in the world, and it has pushed democratic doctrines farther, and worked them out more consistently, than any other European State. . . . The natural conditions might seem most unfavourable to the creation of a State, or even of a nation. . . .[1] No natural boundary marks them off from the Germans to the north and east, from the French to the west, and from the Italians to the south. Ethnologically they belong some to one, some to another, of those three racial stocks, and have no common language.[2] . . . Nearly two-thirds of the population speak German, most of the others French, a few Italian, a still smaller number Romansch or Ladin. A considerable majority both of German-speaking and of French-speaking people are Protestants, the rest Roman Catholics. . . .[3] Swiss political institutions have been built up on the foundation of small communities,

[1] *Modern Democracies*, English edition, p. 367.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 368. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 370.

rural and urban, accustomed to control their own affairs. . . . The commune was from the earliest times a potent factor in accustoming the whole people to take interest in and know how to handle local affairs, every man on a level with his fellows. It is still the political unit of the nation and the focus of its local public life. . . .[1] In the larger towns the commune becomes a municipality, governed by a council. . . .[2] Local self-government has been in Switzerland a factor of prime importance, not only as the basis of the administrative fabric, but also because the training which the people have received from practice in it has been a chief cause of their success in working republican institutions."[3] The government is "everywhere rooted in a system of self-governing communes, where the inhabitants administer all the local affairs, and is as completely popular as can well be imagined."[4] Finally "Switzerland is the only democracy which has found a means of keeping its administrators practically out of party politics".[5]

A commune in Switzerland corresponds to a village-tract in Burma, and has nearly the same average population. It might help Europeans to realize the position of the headmen if village-tracts were called communes, and headmen mayors. It will have been noticed that Switzerland has built up a successful political system in spite of serious difficulties from which Burma is free, and that it has done so on a basis of village self-government which does not greatly differ from the organization described at the beginning of Chapter IV.

I have shown that some of the conditions which are most favourable to the success of parliamentary government in England are precisely those which are most likely to destroy a permanent government. These conditions are, first, direct popular elections to a national assembly in territorial constituencies, at which the candidates need not be residents and are chosen by a party caucus; secondly, free discussions in the assembly, with the right to question ministers;

[1] *Modern Democracies*, English edition, p. 373.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 374.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 375.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 379.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 399.

thirdly, an unlimited right to abuse and misrepresent the Government in the press and in public speeches; and fourthly, a tendency for all those who are opposed to the Government to unite under a single leader. No permanent government has ever existed yet under these conditions. In England the hereditary ruler has ceased to govern. In Germany, where only the first of the conditions was present, he disappeared, as he was certain to do unless kept in power by the army, as soon as a party opposed to the continuance of the monarchy was in a majority in the popular chamber. The various dictators in Europe hold their power precariously, and in none of their countries do even two of the conditions exist.

The electoral system recently introduced into Burma fulfils all these conditions, but the government is a permanent one. It cannot be turned out by any elected body. The Legislative Council can make laws, subject to the Governor's veto, and it can also refuse supplies to the executive; but if it does so its leaders do not take the place of the executive government. If the subject is a reserved one, the Governor can certify the expenditure to be necessary; and even if it is a transferred subject, and therefore dealt with by him and his ministers, he can still authorize emergent expenditure. His ministers may resign, but they are not the Government, and if the legislative chamber has been elected with a view to overthrowing the Government (as it usually is in England) the object is not attained, the pressure of explosive forces is not relieved, and the danger to the State is only increased.

The Burma system, therefore, contains all that part of the British system—periodical elections throughout the country, attacks on the Government in the elected assembly, a united opposition, an anti-Government Press, and so forth —which is best calculated to rouse the people, to excite opposition to the Government, and (I cannot avoid using the words again) to bring it into hatred and contempt. It does not, however, include the machinery for replacing the Government by its opponents, which is the essence of the British system and a cure for all its ills. Whatever

the result of the elections, the Government always remains in power. What would happen under these conditions in England I have already mentioned. The Government would soon cease to have any effective support in the country, or the press, or the elected chamber. The hatred aroused by constant criticism would accumulate till one day, having no other outlet, it would explode in acts of violence. In Burma the process may be slower. The people have not been accustomed hitherto to criticize the Government; they have been far better off under it, especially in Lower Burma, than under any previous government; a third of the population is not Burmese, and may retain the memory of Burmese oppression; the Burmese themselves have experienced the futility of open armed resistance; and they have not yet, it may be hoped, learnt that a humane government is vulnerable in proportion to its humanity, because it cannot or will not, as the Burmese king would have done, avenge the assassination of its officials by wholesale slaughter and devastation. But, though the explosion may be deferred, there seems no adequate reason for supposing that what would happen in a country where the rulers are of the same race as the ruled would not happen also in Burma, where they are of a different race. Though I regard as a foolish superstition the belief that a bad government by rulers who are of the same colour as the ruled is better than a good government by rulers of a different colour, a racial difference between them has undoubtedly its disadvantages as well as its advantages. Certainly its advantages are not such as to avert the evil effects of introducing the British electoral system into Burma without also providing for a change of government when the natural and proper working of the system has made the existing government impossible.

It will have been noticed that a Buddhist monk has been sentenced to three years' imprisonment for doing the very thing that the British electoral system, introduced into Burma in 1923, is in England calculated to do—" bringing or attempting to bring into hatred or contempt, or exciting, or attempting to excite, disaffection towards . . .

the Government established by law". At first sight this seems unjust. But it must be remembered, first, that Burma has not the same system of government as England. In England it is the duty of every good citizen, at some time or other, to do his best to overthrow the Government, because the system provides for a periodical overthrow. In Burma, on the contrary, there is a permanent government, and it is the duty of every citizen to support it unless there is a prospect of putting a better one into its place without violence, or unless it is so bad that even civil war is preferable to its continuance. That has nothing to do with the fact that Burma is ruled by foreigners. If it had a permanent government consisting solely of Burmans the position would be exactly the same. The existence of foreign rule is not in itself a reason why the Government should permit itself to be attacked. Some nations, including Italy, Russia, and Spain, have tried parliamentary government and abandoned it, at least for the time. In all such countries it is impossible for the Government, in the interests of the people as well as its own interests, to allow political campaigns aiming at its overthrow. Complete freedom of speech is the priceless boon conferred by a system which provides for a periodical overthrow of the Government, and by such a system only. All other systems, whatever other advantages they may have, must involve a greater or less degree of restriction and repression. If the present Government is to continue—and I have not the slightest doubt in my own mind that it is to the advantage of all the peoples of Burma that it should continue—it is absolutely necessary to restrain anyone who attempts, publicly at any rate, to bring it into hatred and contempt or to excite disaffection against it. The absurdity is the introduction of the British electoral system, which must inevitably result in so many people committing offences under s. 124 A that it will be impossible to put them all in jail. It is like offering a child a piece of cake (or rather a miniature rifle), and caning the hand outstretched to receive it.

Secondly, if U Oktama had limited himself to mere

abuse of the Government and to expressions of opinion, without making any false statements or any direct incitement to violence (which is punished even in England), it is highly probable that he would not have been prosecuted, though he would still have been liable to prosecution. A prosecution under this section can only be instituted by or with the sanction of the Government, and the Government only acts in serious cases. A law which is not enforced except in serious cases is certainly open to objection, for it is impossible for a man to tell how far he may go with impunity. But offences against the State are peculiar, in that a question of prosecution must necessarily be one of policy as well as of law. The question to be decided is not merely, Did so and so commit an offence? but also, Would a prosecution be desirable in the interests of the community? Therefore, no matter how the law is worded, there must always be people breaking it with impunity; and after all the same may be said of most laws, which are not enforced in trivial matters. The remedy is for people to abstain from violent abuse of the Government, and still more from false statements and incitement to violence. It is certain that the Government, in its own interests, will not prosecute anyone who follows this rule of conduct, even if he technically commits an offence by criticizing its acts.

I have not overlooked the explanations to s. 124 A, which exempt from punishment comments merely expressing disapprobation of Government measures or actions so long as there is no attempt to excite hatred, contempt, or disaffection. I have not mentioned them before because they seem to me to have little or no meaning. All criticism of the Government, however moderate and reasonable, must tend to excite these emotions, if it has any effect on its hearers. It may, of course, be counterbalanced (as in this book) by arguments in favour of supporting the Government, so that the total effect may be more useful, from the Government point of view, than indiscriminate praise; but that does not make it any the less a technical offence.

It is not law, then, that is wrong, but the foreign system of direct election to a national council; which, however admirable in a country where it is suited both to the constitution and to the temperament of the people, will in Burma lead inevitably to law-breaking; probably, sooner or later, to violence; and perhaps eventually to civil war. The system is the very reverse of self-government, if self-government means government by the people, or devolution. Its tendency is not to devolution, but to centralization, and any pressure put on the Government comes, not from the people, but from a caucus in Rangoon. It is not, as far as I can see, likely to make for the happiness of the people, or to serve any useful purpose. But, we are told, it must be introduced, because the British cannot be expected to stay in the country for ever, and because it is necessary to prepare the way for self-government. The former of these two statements—unfortunately, perhaps, for the people of Burma—is true; the latter, I hope to show, tells rather against the system than for it.

Those who say it is necessary to prepare the way for self-government mean by this term something entirely different from government by the people, or democracy, or representative government. They mean government by persons of the same race as governed. In this sense the Burmans under King Thibaw had self-government; the Mons, Karens, Shans, and other races subject to the old Burmese kings had it not. The Russians in Russia have self-government, and the Italians in Italy, but not the Russians or Italians in the United States.

If we are to prepare the Burmese for self-government in this sense, it is clearly our duty to consider first what kind of government they are likely to have when we have left the country. That is not at all likely to be two-party government of the English variety. The English system is only possible with a certain temperament—a temperament which appears to be peculiar to the northern races of Europe. There are various other systems which may be followed. The most promising, I think, is based on an extension of the village system, not unlike that proposed by the Govern-

ment of Burma in 1918. I fear the one we are most likely to see is a sheer despotism of the kind to which the Burmese people were too long accustomed—a despotism gaining power by violence, and maintaining it by terrorism. In such a government Burmans who have had an English education are the last persons likely to be given a share. They are more likely to have their throats cut. Or there may be a mild despotism of the kind now existing in Siam. But how is a system of direct elections to a national council a preparation for any of these? Far from being a preparation, its very nature makes any stable government impossible. It is a piece of machinery for overthrowing governments. It can only lead to instability and, unless two-party government is successfully established, revolt and civil war.

I know that many Englishmen will be unconvinced by these arguments. They will say that we have no "right" to be in Burma; that the sooner we clear out the better; and that before doing so we ought to establish a piece of political machinery which will enable the Burmese to set up a two-party government of their own on the English model. If they cannot, so much the worse for them; it is not our business.

I do not propose to discuss the question of our right to be in Burma. That is a matter of history, and I leave the reader to draw his own conclusions from the brief story of the three annexations which I have told in the first chapter. These conclusions will doubtless vary; but whether or not we had a right to enter the country, we are there now, and the question is what should we do there. One might as well tell a man who asks for advice as to the bringing up of an illegitimate child that he has no right to have an illegitimate child. This part of the argument, therefore, is irrelevant. The rest is purely selfish. I do not hope to convince these people that it is to their interest that we should remain in Burma. But I believe it to be in the interest of the Burmese people that we should remain there, and if we remain we must control the general policy of the Government. I also think we should prepare the Burmese

for self-government as rapidly as possible, because we do not know how long we can remain. But a directly elected national council is, I believe, the worst possible preparation.

There is a common idea that a people is unfit for democratic government unless it contains a considerable number of highly educated men; and further, that when it gets an educated class the power should be entrusted solely to that class, from which it will somehow work its way downward to the people as they become educated. I cannot find any justification for either of these beliefs. They are, indeed, pretty nearly the reverse of the truth. The people that is least fit for a democratic government is one with a large, powerful, wealthy, and highly educated aristocracy or middle class, with an ignorant peasantry or proletariat. The people best fitted for democratic government is an intelligent peasantry with no aristocracy and no rich middle class.

"From Britain we may turn to trace the swifter growth of democracy in those branches of the English people which established themselves beyond the seas. The North American colonies of England were settled by persons belonging (except to some extent in Virginia) to the middle and humbler classes, among whom there was at first little or no difference in wealth, and not very much in rank. Social and economic conditions creating social equality made political equality ultimately inevitable." Thus wrote Viscount Bryce in his *Modern Democracies*.[1] In those days the middle and humbler classes of Englishmen were not educated as they are now. Probably most of the settlers were illiterate. Yet Lord Bryce does not say that democracy came in spite of their lack of education, but that it was inevitable!

It was not inevitable among the Burmese. Social equality was even greater among them than among the North American settlers, but it did not lead to democratic government beyond the village organization. As long as

[1] English edition, i. 36. I had written nearly the whole of this chapter as it stands before I read Lord Bryce's book.

villages were independent of each other, the government was as democratic as it could well be. If, as is probable, the system resembled that now existing among the Nagas, it was government by a village committee elected by the villagers. When the people were organized by foreigners [1] for war they were given the only kind of large organization the foreigners understood—a king, with military and civil officers appointed by him and getting what they could out of the people. It would have been just as easy to organize them in the manner I have suggested, the village committees sending their headmen as delegates to a council, the councils sending delegates to other councils ruling over a larger area, and so on. Presumably no one thought of such a device, or the other was found more suitable for war.

There is more excuse for the second belief, because educated men are needed to carry on a highly organized administration; and the fewer private organizations a people have, the more highly organized does the State administration need to be. This, however, is only an argument for putting the educated men into the civil service. It is not an argument for giving them the supreme power, which they are all too likely to use for their own benefit. And as for the power somehow working its way downward to the people, too much must not be inferred from the recent history of England, where sympathy for the under-dog and a spirit of compromise exist as in few other countries. The usual tendency, when the educated and wealthy get the power into their hands, is for them to keep it until it is wrested from them by force.

I understand that the Burmese Nationalists—not U Oktama's party, but the more moderate men—are dissatisfied with the present reforms. They aim at home-rule within the Empire, on the lines of the British constitution. That is, they would have a Governor, either an Englishman or a Burman, appointed by the King-Emperor, but with

[1] See pp. 64, 65.

THE CHINDWIN FROM THE SHWEPĂLIN ROCK

POUNDING RICE AT TĂMANTHI, UPPER CHINDWIN

no power to interfere with the decisions of his ministers, who would be Burmans and would be responsible only to a national assembly elected as now. British troops would remain in the country to defend it from outside attack and to keep order, or a Burmese army would be formed and assistance obtained if necessary from the British army and navy in the event of an attack by a stronger Power. The civil service would remain as it is, strengthened—at least for a time—by the presence of English experts. The Governor would presumably be bound to appoint the leader of the opposition, or the leader of the strongest group outside the Government, whenever the Government is defeated in the national assembly.

I think it possible that this scheme might work (in whose interests it is not necessary to discuss here) if there were never any desire on the part of the majority in the chamber to get rid of the British-appointed Governor, and if the prime minister, though supreme, shaped his policy in such a way as to avoid giving offence to the suzerain. The second may seem the bigger "if". It would require no small self-control on the part of a Burman minister, unrestrained by tradition or public opinion, to refrain from political or interested interference with the civil service, to refuse bribes and suppress corruption, to avoid all measures which would shock public opinion in England, to give due weight to the Governor's advice, and to placate British interests (not always reasonable) within the country and in foreign relations. He might be restrained, however, by a fear of the withdrawal of British protection or the resumption of British rule, and it is possible that this restraint might be effective. I am more afraid of the other "if", especially with the present system of election. Once the position of the Governor and the relations of the country with the suzerain power became an election issue, the constitution would be doomed. With the present electoral system, and the present agitation in Burma, it could hardly help becoming *the* issue. This would mean that all the resources of the opposition would be devoted to putting

in power a party pledged to sever the British connection, and I have already explained that these resources are so powerful that, whatever the state of public opinion might be at first, the contest would almost inevitably end in the triumph of the opposition. The Governor would then have to be withdrawn, or the country re-conquered. So in England, if the abolition of the monarchy were widely made an election issue at general elections, sooner or later the party advocating it would get into power, and the monarchy would cease to exist.

I believe, however, that with another method of election the course of events would be very different. We have seen that in Switzerland, one of the most democratic of States, there are no parties in the English sense, that the executive is habitually re-elected, that candidates are chosen by the people and not by a caucus, and that the tendency of the electorate is to pick the best man for the job rather than one who will support a particular policy. We have seen also that this state of things, so different from that in England, is attributed to the training of the Swiss in an indigenous system of local government, to which we in England are strangers. Now the Burmese also have had, for thousands of years, an indigenous system of local government, the only representative institution they understand, and one which has stood like a rock through all their history: the system of village headmen and village committees elected by the people. As I have shown in a previous chapter, it is the one stable element in indigenous institutions. The principle of election to the headmanship has resulted in the existence of a body of men imbued with an idea of public service rare among orientals. The headmen are even now as nearly representative of their villages as anyone who can be found, and they can be made more so by requiring their election to be in every case by secret ballot, while at the same time their office could be made more dignified and independent. It would surely be better to extend this principle than to introduce one which is entirely foreign to the people's ideas. What should be

aimed at is not the two-party system (an instrument of government which is impossible as long as British rule lasts, and probably impracticable in Burma altogether), but representation of the people; and this is far better secured by their electing some one who lives among them and whom they know well than by their accepting a stranger imposed on them by a party caucus. If a representative government is sought, as distinguished from a body of men elected for the purpose of overthrowing the government, it could be obtained by making the headmen electors for the circle boards, who would elect the district councils, who would in turn elect the national council. This would be self-government in a far truer sense than the new and exotic system of direct election to a legislative council. Instead of the candidate being a complete stranger, selected by a distant caucus on the ground of his ability to persuade the villagers to join in overthrowing the Government, he would be a resident of the village, and would be chosen by the villagers themselves as a man who is likely to treat them well and to further the interests of the village. Such a system would not, as the present one does, tend to throw the government of the country (so far as it is not British) into the hands of a few rich men, lawyers, and professional politicians, whose interests are often opposed to those of the mass of the people. It would enable the voices of the rural population to be heard; and the rural population is nine-tenths of the whole. My belief is that with this system a form of government could be evolved which would be, as compared with all other oriental governments, stable, just, and efficient, and would make for the prosperity of the whole people and not only for that of a class. Further, it can be combined, as the present system cannot be, with protection from a great military Power which sincerely desires the happiness of other peoples as far as is compatible with its own interests. If the Burmese home-rulers are wise, and really desire the prosperity of their country, they will petition the King to do away with the foreign electoral system which has recently been introduced among them, and to substitute one which is consonant, not only with

democratic principles, but with their own genius, institutions, and needs.

Under this system there might be parties as in Switzerland, but the members of the legislature would be chosen, not by the party caucuses, but by the people; indirectly it is true, and by electors selected for their fitness to fill local posts rather than for their political opinions. There would be far less likelihood than now of a party with a majority in the legislature pledged to destroy the executive and therefore the British connection. This electoral system would be equally well suited for the present dual control, or for home-rule within the Empire, or for an entirely independent government. It would be a real preparation for self-government in both senses of the word. The present electoral system is not a good preparation for self-government in any sense.

I propose to devote the rest of this chapter to some of the questions, racial and economic, which are likely to engage the attention of Burma governments of the future, whether British or Burmese.

If I have laid stress on diversity of race in Burma, it is not because I think that racial consciousness ought to be encouraged. Racial antagonism is one of the greatest evils known to mankind. Sometimes, as between Burmans and Indians, the barriers are too wide and deep to be levelled; but where they can be obliterated altogether it is all to the good of the world that they should be. In Burma, as I have shown in previous chapters, we have some remarkable instances of such obliteration. The latest, not yet quite complete, is that of the Mons, who occupied the delta areas of Lower Burma, and to whom the Burmese owe much of their civilization. No doubt the Burmese king acted high-handedly, during the first half of the nineteenth century, in prohibiting their language. But the result has been that, with the exception of a few hundred thousand, the Mons, like the Pyus and the Kădus and others before them, are now no longer conscious of any difference between themselves and Burmans. This result is wholly to the good

of the country. It makes Burma, excluding the Shan States, a homogeneous unit linguistically and racially as it is geographically. The "growing racial consciousness" of the Mons, mentioned in the last census report as causing many of them to return themselves as such for the first time, is to be deplored. Fortunately these race-conscious Mons are too few, and the Kărens too scattered, to break the unity of the people of Burma, who can now for the first time in history live together peacefully as a nation.

On the other hand Burma as a whole is completely cut off by mountain ranges from India generally, and there can hardly be two adjacent countries in the world whose peoples differ more widely in race, language, customs, and religion, and in their whole outlook on life. Indian rule in Burma would be disastrous from every point of view.

But if political unity with India is out of the question, can Indian immigration be stopped? It has done no good to Burma, and is partly responsible for the unequal distribution of wealth which has driven Burmans into crime. Many people, like myself, would like to see the country kept for the Burmans. But this cannot be done by a government which is responsible for the welfare of India; nor by a Burmese government without tempting its neighbours to invade Burma, which is rich and sparsely populated while India is poor and overflowing. The best course seems to be neither to prevent immigration nor to open the flood-gates by making a railway from India into Burma, and this appears to be the present policy of the Government.

The economic questions are of extraordinary interest. I will first clear the ground by considering whether the State in Burma should devote its attention more to agriculture or to manufactures. I understand some nationalists to desire Burma to become a manufacturing country. They see that some manufacturing countries are great military Powers, and they think that these countries should be imitated.

In my opinion this is a mistake. It is true that under modern conditions manufactures on a large scale are necessary for armaments. But it does not follow that a manufacturing country is powerful in a military sense. Belgium is a manufacturing country, but her army is probably worse than useless, while the fact that she cannot feed herself is a source of weakness. England, with all her strength, is extremely vulnerable for the same reason. Her manufactures once gave her a position of great economic strength, because the world needed manufactures more than food, and she was better able to supply them than any other country. But now the position is reversed, and there is more demand for food and raw materials than for manufactures. Nor does military power promote the happiness of the people, though it may satisfy some individual ambitions and the pride of race. The conquests of the Burmese brought them little but misery, and the Germans are now undergoing terrible privations and deep humiliation as the result of their having had the most powerful army the world has seen.

It is gradually being recognized that the future lies with the countries that are self-supporting rather than with those that can only feed their population by setting it to make goods for others. It is also being recognized that the factory system, though it made the wealth of England, is more of a curse than a blessing to the country that adopts it, even if its horrors are mitigated by legislation.

A happy and independent race of farmers and traders, with a large surplus of food to export, may well be content to let others slave to produce goods for them. When the population of Burma has increased to such an extent that there is no longer a surplus of food, or that holdings are being reduced to an uneconomic size, it will be time to consider the problem of how to make full use of machinery so as to keep everyone in comfort without killing the happiness and independence of the man who works the machine. By that time the problem may have been solved by others.

Clearly Burma should organize its food supply for export, and admit manufactured goods freely for the use of the people. Import dues, which benefit no one and only increase the tendency to an unequal distribution of wealth, should be abolished. Raw materials which are liable to exhaustion are now rightly conserved for the future by means of royalties and export duties. The export of agricultural produce, on the other hand, should be encouraged in every way, but always so that the workers—farmers, peasants, and labourers—get their fair share of the proceeds.

So far the export trade in agricultural products has resulted in the formation of two new classes: landlords, who take from the community but give nothing in return, and agricultural labourers, who are underpaid and take to crime. In other words, it has resulted in a new and bad distribution of wealth, disastrous to the community. It is no use blaming economic laws for this. I have already shown[1] how, without any legislation, the formation of a landlord class could have been prevented, and how much can even now be done in this direction. I now hope to show how the wages of agricultural labourers can be raised, and their number, still comparatively small, greatly reduced. The two last problems are the same, since high wages will automatically decrease the number of wage-earners by checking the present tendency to form large estates with hired labour, and will give advantages to the peasant over the large farmer. Large estates are constantly deplored in official reports, but I have nowhere seen it suggested that if wages are sufficiently raised such estates will cease to pay, and will disappear.

As already said, I do not favour the exclusion of the Indian labourer. It would be better to take bold measures, as described below, for the colonization of the vast empty spaces still remaining in Burma—almost two-thirds of the

[1] Notes B and C.

whole arable area. These measures would draw off many labourers, and raise the wages of those that remain. But, with the ever-flowing stream of immigration from India, and the natural increase of the Burmese population, it would be no permanent remedy. That can only be obtained, as far as I can see, by a legal minimum wage, varying with locality and the price of rice. To impose the minimum wage without providing occupation for the labourers who are thrown out of work by it would be a mistake, but ample occupation can be provided, if the Government chooses to put down the money, under a colonization scheme. The minimum wage should come later, as a precaution against a recrudescence of the present evil.

I believe some attempts at colonization have already been made in the north of Burma, where there are large fertile tracts of forest near the railway. They have probably failed for want of colonists provided with capital or able to give security for advances made to them by the Government. Burmans who have any capital or credit do not go to outlandish malarial districts like Katha. It is futile to expect agricultural labourers to provide capital, and any scheme which depends on the land being developed with private capital is certain to fail as a preventive of poverty and crime. Nor is private capital at all necessary. If the Government gave free railway passes for whole families to the colony; if it there fed and clothed them, and protected them from malaria, and provided them with all the necessaries of life and some money for little luxuries, I believe the scheme would succeed. No advances need be given, but a colonization officer could be stationed in each area to distribute food and other goods as needed. There would be no appreciable risk. Even if a family disappeared occasionally with a week's supply of food and some clothing, the loss would be trifling as compared with the rents which would be obtainable later on, and more trifling still as compared with the enormous sums that the Government is now quite unnecessarily giving away to the landholders. The colonists would build their own houses, but in such

a district as Katha mosquito-curtains and warm clothing[1] should be provided for them, and all possible measures taken for the prevention of malaria. They should be promised exemption from all taxes for a number of years. In a few years there would be a handsome surplus, which the Government should take instead of leaving it, perhaps, to support these very colonists in idleness as landlords. I believe many of the Burman agricultural labourers in the delta would accept such an offer. Once the stream of migration is fairly started it will flow of itself, as it did to the delta some years ago. As the most inaccessible lands get used up, roads and railways could be constructed to open up others. The north of Burma has been mentioned because it has a railway running through uncultivated land, but in Mergui District there are hundreds of square miles of uninhabited forest—good rice-land and easily accessible by sea.

There are thus three important lines of action which I venture to suggest the Government of Burma should follow for the welfare of the community, the more equitable distribution of any wealth acquired in the future, and the elimination of poverty and crime. I suggest, first, that it should put an end to the growth of the landlord class, and greatly increase its own resources, by raising the land revenue so as to take for the people the newly-added surplus from the land. Secondly, that it should, by a bold but profitable expenditure of money, settle the Burman agricultural labourers and their families on the vast uncultivated areas in the outlying parts of Burma, and thus reduce their numbers while raising the rate of wages and discouraging the formation of large estates. Thirdly, that it should prevent, by the establishment of a legal minimum, any re-lowering of the rate of wages which might otherwise be caused by the competition of immigrants from India.

[1] Burmans from a warmer climate dread the cold season in the north far more than they do the rains, and say it is more feverish. Probably a fresh infection can only be contracted in the rainy season; but most Burmans who travel have the bacillus somewhere in their system, and in cold weather they go down with fever if they have not warm clothing.

Other economic questions are, I think, of minor importance. For instance, much has already been done for the cultivator by the establishment of co-operative credit societies, and much more might be done by inducing farmers to combine for the purchase of their needs and the sale of their produce. But such measures are now of no permanent benefit to the farmer. They merely enable him to pay an increased rent to the landlord, who in the end gets the whole benefit. If, however, the State takes the increased rent instead of the landlord, the benefit will go to the whole community, farmers included.

In my note on the land (p. 211) I have shown how a very large sum, amounting to more than the whole revenue of the province, could apparently be obtained without injustice to anyone by adding to the land revenue the rise in the rent of land since the last settlement. What use should be made of these millions? In the first place they could be used to finance the schemes of colonization suggested above, if no other money is forthcoming. This expenditure, however, would be productive of more land revenue, and would therefore be of the nature of a loan. Secondly, the capitation and household taxes could be abolished. Thirdly, large expenditure on education could be undertaken. Fourthly, when Burma is separated from India, the import duties could be dispensed with. It can hardly be denied that all these measures would benefit the community as a whole.

Burma has a long start over other countries on the road towards an ideal social organization. Her land is nationalized. Her resources are great, and her population small. Her wealth is still, in comparison with more advanced countries, evenly distributed. She has no industrial proletariat, and no feudal or caste system to break down. Her people—men, women, and children—are as free as any in the world from all kinds of restraint and tyranny—official, priestly, economic, and domestic. She has indigenous systems of self-government and education. She has no serious racial questions, no religious differences, a compact and homogeneous population, and excellent boundaries.

With good government she has nothing to fear except attack from without, and from that she is protected by the Power best able to protect her. We shall be indeed to blame if we do not set her on the road to still greater happiness, and the Burmese people will have only themselves to thank if they do not climb from height to height of prosperity.

# NOTES TO CHAPTER IV

## NOTE A. VILLAGE ADMINISTRATION

THE village system differs but little from that which the British found in Upper Burma when they annexed that country in 1886. Each headman had under him a single village and its lands, with perhaps one or more outlying hamlets. He spent his life in almost daily contact with the people he ruled, so that all his actions were known, and corrupt or oppressive conduct on his part made comparatively difficult. On the other hand it was not easy for the villagers to do anything without his knowledge. He could thus be held responsible for all that went on. When communal responsibility was enforced against his village, he acted as its representative and spokesman. Sometimes, as already mentioned, headmen were grouped together under overlords or superior headmen, but these were irregular and acci dental features of the system.

In Lower Burma, which was brought under our rule in 1826 and 1852, this system had fallen into decay, if indeed it had ever existed in those provinces under the Burmese king. The aim of the Burmese, after their conquests in the eighteenth century, would naturally be to weaken the authority of the Mon and Arakanese headmen, except such as were loyal to the new government, and to substitute officials of their own, ruling over a larger area. Whether or not this is what happened, we found the villages in charge of men with little authority, who got no share of the revenue collected, and were not usually given the title, meaning "big man," of a headman in Upper Burma, but were called merely "heads," or "principal taxpayers." Above them, in charge of circles containing each a considerable number of villages, were the "big men." These were naturally Burmans after the Burmese conquests, and were remunerated as Burmese officials were usually remunerated: not by paying them salaries, but by farming the taxes to them. When the higher official posts were abolished by our government, and officers appointed on fixed salaries, these "big men" (or such of them as accepted our rule) were retained, and given commission on their collections.

The essential conditions of the village system, which I have described above, were absent. Living at a distance from most of the villages they ruled, the "big men" were corrupt and tyrannical, and those who succeeded in pleasing the officials over them by their energy and loyalty were often not less so than the others. Though they were no longer, perhaps, regarded as officials, it paid them, with the lucrative positions they held, to keep in with their superiors rather than to consult the interests of the people under them. Lazy officials, whether Burmese or British, much preferred this system to the other. They had few persons to deal with instead of many, and a far greater hold over them. It was also preferred by all those whose first aim it was to get things to run smoothly in their charges and to make a good show for their superiors.

After the annexation Sir Charles Crosthwaite, who succeeded Sir Charles Bernard as Chief Commissioner, was quick to recognize the immense superiority of the Upper Burma system over that to which his officers had been accustomed in Lower Burma. He checked the natural tendency of his officials to enlarge the jurisdictions of the Upper Burma headmen, and so make touring and collection of revenue easier for themselves. He laid down that villages grouped under a headman should be within sight and hail of each other. "The headman," he wrote in a minute of 1890, in which he explained the Regulation drafted by him in 1887 and made law in that year, "lives among his people, and must know all that is going on about him. The responsibility imposed upon him is unreasonable under any other supposition." He speaks of the evils of subordinating the village system to the system of revenue collection. "Some officers," he adds, "have been unable to refrain from . . . enlarging the charges of *thugyis* (headmen) whenever an opportunity has arisen."

It is not surprising, therefore, that when Sir Charles Crosthwaite and his successors proposed to abolish circles in Lower Burma, and to appoint headmen with the position, emoluments, and powers which they enjoyed in Upper Burma, they were opposed by the majority of their officials. It needed courage and determination to introduce a new system in the teeth of opposition from most of the men who were to administer it. But the orders were loyally carried out, in spite of the attempts of some officers to give the new headmen larger jurisdictions than were contemplated, on the plea that their commission would otherwise be absurdly small.

Thus the Upper Burma system was gradually extended to Lower Burma, as the circles fell vacant through the death or dismissal of the "big men". In 1892 the Chief Commissioner recorded that the opinions of his officers were equally divided, but that most of those who had served in both Upper and Lower Burma, and were best qualified to judge, were in favour of the change. It was necessary, he said, to bear in mind the interests of good administration, and not merely the revenue aspects of the question; though it was natural that officers accustomed to the present system should oppose the change.

Under this wise policy village headmen were appointed everywhere, performing their duties at first without remuneration until the disappearance of the circle men, of whom few are now left. A certain type of officer still persisted in grouping too many villages under a single headman when he got a chance, but these unwieldy charges were divided when an opportunity occurred, so as to bring them into accordance with the government policy.

This policy, however, seems to have been reversed in 1917, if one may judge by the orders of the Government of Burma issued in August of that year. After remarking that the position of headmen has been lowered, principally owing to excessive subdivision of village-tracts, Sir Harcourt Butler lays down:— "An indispensable condition everywhere is that a headman shall have a charge of sufficient importance to give him a position of authority, and shall receive adequate remuneration. Wherever village-tracts are too small, they must be enlarged for that purpose. This entails amalgamation of neighbouring village-tracts, which is already being gradually effected; but progress hitherto has been comparatively small, and if the present system of waiting for vacancies continues there is danger, in many parts of the province, that the process may die of inanition. In the Lieutenant-Governor's view a strenuous effort should be made, where the conditions are not unfavourable, to convert all village-tracts to a size compatible with administrative efficiency." He suggests further that districts should be divided into groups of villages, and headmen invited to arrange reduction of their number, or in other words to extinguish themselves. Nothing is said about the necessity of a headman knowing his charge. These orders are printed in the latest edition of the Village Manual published for the use of officers, and no qualifications of them appear therein. Since 1916, owing to the abolition of over fifty of the old circles, the number of headmen receiving commission should have increased

by about a thousand. Actually it has decreased by something like that number.

I think this is to be regretted. In a remote and thinly populated area the revenue, and therefore the headman's commission, must needs be small, and the office burdensome owing to the great distances to be travelled. But the proper remedy is not to make the area of the headman's charge still larger, but to ease his burdens. Headmen are not expected to live on their commission. They all have their own occupations.

A great deal can be done to lessen the burdens of the office and to increase its dignity. The headman is now at the mercy of a bullying or thoughtless Township Officer, who can call him to his headquarters as often as he pleases, and keep him waiting there for days. He is also at the beck and call of every petty official who comes to the neighbourhood and wants supplies of food or transport. There are orders of the Government warning officials to respect the headman's dignity, but they are too vague to be of much use. Apart from legal processes, officials below gazetted rank (except Subdivisional and Township Officers) could be forbidden to send for a headman in any circumstances, and this order could be made known to the headmen; and any Subdivisional or Township Officer, or official of another department, whatever his rank, who calls a headman away from his village otherwise than by legal process could be required to report the fact, with his reasons, to the Deputy Commissioner of the district. The power of the district officer to inflict petty fines on headmen might well be withdrawn. As a district officer I found it unnecessary, and the fines only cause irritation. The election of the headman by secret ballot should be insisted on in every case. He should be looked upon as the representative of the village, and regarded with respect. If such measures as these were made effective, I believe that the headman's life would be very different, and that better men will come forward for election.

## NOTE B. MARKET RENTS

In all properly managed municipalities in Burma the stalls in the public market are put up to auction every year. Sometimes, through official slackness or incompetence, this is not done, and vested interests spring up. Thus in one market I found stalls held from the municipality at five rupees a month being sublet for sixty (£4). One of the municipal commissioners had to admit that he was personally interested, and I only carried a resolution to auction the stalls by disallowing his vote. It is difficult to get municipal committees, and sometimes even English officials, to understand that market rents are the property of the townspeople received by the committee in trust, and that the committee cannot accept less than a competition rent without a breach of that trust. Yet one instance will, I think, make this clear.

In a large town in Lower Burma, where the market was overcrowded and insanitary, and vested interests had been formed, new sheds were built at my instance, and the stalls under them put up to auction. One stall, next the entrance, went for thirty rupees (£2) a month; others but a few feet away fetched only the reserved rent of three rupees (4s.); and others again found no bidders. As the principal executive officer of the committee I was attacked in the local paper for demanding what was called an exorbitant rent for the first stall, and indeed the rent was higher than some what were being charged for far better positions in the old market. So I went to the stall-holder and offered to allow her to give up her stall at once without the usual notice, and take one near by at three rupees. She laughed pleasantly, and said she would rather pay thirty and remain where she was.

Now if, from whatever motive, I had allowed this woman to keep her stall at three rupees a month, I should clearly have been guilty of misappropriating, and handing over to her, the monthly difference of twenty-seven rupees. In charging her thirty I was not oppressing the poor, though she was probably quite a poor woman. To have charged her less would have been

unjust to the townspeople, both rich and poor, and to the holders of stalls in a less favourable position. Nor would it have caused her to sell her goods any cheaper. She would have continued to sell them at the competition price, and pocketed the twenty-seven rupees a month, which belonged to the townspeople as surely as if I had paid them out of municipal funds. If her poverty entitled her to this, similar payment should have been made from municipal funds to all the other poor in the town.

This truth is so obvious that the reader may think I am wasting his time in stating it. Yet such is the confusion of thought in this matter that in the report of a committee appointed in 1921 by the Government of Burma to inquire into municipal taxation I find the statement: "Under existing conditions in Burma, the form of taxation chiefly likely to affect prices is stall rent and dues in markets. . . . Stall-rents should not be so high as to affect the price of necessaries". Clearly the committee thought that if there were no municipal markets prices would be lower! It is true that the writer of the report contradicts himself by saying that municipal committees should have no difficulty in ascertaining when a suitable rate has been reached, because if rents are excessive the stalls will be empty; in other words, that competition rents should be charged. But unfortunately it is the earlier statement that is likely to be listened to by municipal committees, the members of which, or their friends, are more often than not personally interested in the market stalls.

An even more astonishing suggestion is made on another page. The committee found that the sale of meat in a market tended to become a monopoly. "Perhaps the worst case that came to our notice was the case of two pork-stalls at Maubin, which sold for a monthly rent of Rs. 100 each. Considering that Rs. 20 or 25 would have been an excessive rent for the accommodation provided, it is difficult to believe that the payment of Rs. 100 will not affect the price of the pork. . . . In most markets in Burma beef-stalls are let for very high prices; and, though theoretically they are let to different purchasers, we have reason to believe that monopolies exist. . . . The only suggestion that we can offer is that the practice followed in Calcutta should be adopted in Burma; that is, that no *salaami* [premium] should be charged on food-stuff stalls. There remains the difficulty of deciding between rival candidates for a stall, a difficulty which would be extremely acute in the case of beef and pork stalls. We are informed in Calcutta that existing occupants

are always allowed to continue from year to year, subject to good behaviour. If the occupant does not wish to continue, the claims of the rival candidates are decided by lot." It is a naïve idea this, the idea that the evils of a monopoly are removed by subsidizing the monopolist out of the ratepayer's money; for giving him the stalls at a reduced rent is equivalent to that. Even more delightful is the plan of offering the monopoly as a prize at a public lottery at which (lest the townspeople should by any possibility benefit) all the tickets are free.

To call the levy of stall-rents taxation, as the report does, is a misuse of language, calculated to mislead the public. Taxation is the confiscation of part of the property of individuals for the benefit of the community. A demand for stall-rent is not confiscation. The payment is made voluntarily for the use of the townspeople's property.

Strange to say, having attempted to justify this misappropriation of public property by saying that it will lower prices (which it will not do), the committee next proposes to raise prices by charging an *octroi* (or, as the committee calls it, a terminal tax) on all goods entering the town, on the ground that municipalities cannot otherwise pay their way. Whether this proposal has been adopted or not I do not know, but the recommendations of the committee have been commended by a Government resolution to all municipalities in Burma.

If the reader agrees with me, he will probably find it difficult to avoid applying to all land which is national property the principle on which I demanded from a stall-holder a payment of twenty-seven rupees a month. Once grant that the land is national property, and it becomes the duty of the Government, as the national trustee, to take from the occupants the difference in annual value between the land which they occupy and lands which are less fertile or less favourably situated. In other words, it is the duty of the Government to take from the occupants of land, whether used for agriculture or for building or for any other purpose, the economic rent, except so far as the value of the land has been increased by the occupant himself. Whether a Government should suddenly demand the full economic rent after having failed to do so for a long period, so that the occupant has obtained a kind of prescriptive right, is another question. My point is that it ought to do so when the land is first occupied, and to continue doing so thereafter as the land, through no action of the occupant, becomes more valuable.

That this has not been done is probably due to the widespread fallacy that land revenue is not a rent but a tax. The very use of the neutral term "land revenue" expresses the disagreement on this point of the revenue authorities in India. I quote against my view one of the latest of these authorities, Mr. Findlay Shirras in his *Science of Public Finance*, published in 1924. "Land taxation in India," he writes, "usually known as land revenue, is of immemorial antiquity. The question whether land revenue is a rent or a tax is now usually regarded as not worth arguing. It certainly is not, except in the rarest of cases, pure rent, and, like similar imposts on land in other countries, is best classified as a tax. It has all the characteristics of a tax, and its classification as rent or as a tax does not in any way affect its incidence or its effects. There are some, however, who prefer to keep to the theory that the land revenue of India is rent."

This statement contains two propositions: first, that land revenue is nearly always, in part at least, a tax and not a rent; and secondly, that even if it is a rent the fact makes no practical difference. With both these propositions I find myself obliged to disagree.

Mr. Shirras does not explain how land revenue is usually in part a tax. He defines taxes as follows on p. 113 of his book. "Taxes are compulsory contributions to public authorities to meet the general expenses of government which have been incurred for the public good and without reference to special benefits. From the time we enter the world until we leave it, whether we are rich or poor, we depend at every stage on the machinery of government, especially for the protection of life and property. Taxes, therefore, are paid for the participation in such common benefits, and not for any special advantages enjoyed by the taxpayer." If the sole right to use a piece of land belonging to the community, as distinguished from the right to share its use with others (as in the case of a public road or park) is not a special benefit, I do not know what is.

I agree that if the value of the land has been partly made by the cultivator, and the full economic rent (or more than the rent due to the natural value of the land) is levied on him, the rent will in part be indistinguishable in its nature from a tax; but that is never, so far as I am aware, the case in India. I also agree that if the community has abandoned, wholly or in part, its right to levy rent on the land, and afterwards resumes that

right, the rent first levied by it under the resumed right will, so far as the landlord is concerned, have the same effect as a tax on him. (It will still be a rent as far as the tenant is concerned, since it cannot, assuming that he is already paying the economic rent, be passed on to him.) Something of this kind happened in Upper Burma with respect to ancestral lands which were at first exempted and afterwards assessed to revenue; but the landholders, mostly peasant proprietors, were partly compensated by a reduction of the household-tax, and I know of no other instance.

If the second proposition is true—that it makes no practical difference whether the assessment is in fact a rent or a tax—it is true not only of agricultural land, but also of building land and market stalls. It follows that my demand of £2 a month from a poor vegetable-seller in the Bassein market was unjust; for it would certainly be unjust to tax a poor woman £24 a year—to confiscate, perhaps, more than half her income to meet the expenses of the community, which could get the money from its richer members without causing them any inconvenience.

The difference between tax and rent is none the less real because it is obscured in the case of long-occupied land on which the land revenue is fixed permanently or for a term of years, while the remainder of the economic rent goes to private landlords. It is because of this obscurity, which seems to have misled even so able a thinker as Mr. Shirras, that I have cited the case of the market stall-holder. The obscurity is the cause of the fallacy that land revenue is a tax and not a rent. The fallacy has led in turn to the newly occupied lands of Lower Burma being greatly under-assessed, with the result that a landlord class has sprung up from nothing, that no one has benefited except the new landlords, who no longer have to work for a living, and that the community has been deeply injured. It has even been extended to stalls in a municipal market, and we are now told, by a committee whose findings have been approved by the Burma Government, that the rent of these is not a rent, but a tax. But I cannot imagine any intelligent person holding that the twenty-seven rupees which I collected from the Bassein stall-holder was a tax and not a rent. At what point, then, does the tax become a rent, or the rent a tax? If this question cannot be answered, the proposition that land revenue is a tax and not a rent is reduced to an absurdity by my example of the municipal stall-holder; and it cannot fairly be said that the matter is "not worth arguing".

Indeed, this question is probably the most important that Indian finance has to answer. The fallacy I have mentioned is the basis of most of the attacks made on British policy in India. We are constantly told that the cultivator is over-taxed because he pays land revenue. My charge against the Government is that, far from taking too much from the cultivator, it does not, in most cases, take enough. It has allowed the enormous increase in the value of land to go into the pockets of a comparatively few individuals without, in the long run, benefiting the cultivator. The revenue thus lost could have been used to abolish all the taxation, direct and indirect, which now falls on the poor, and to bring other real benefits to the cultivator. Mr. Shirras[1] himself condemns the iniquitous permanent settlement of Bengal in 1793, the effect of which is now to transfer annually to landlords, without any consideration whatever, over four million sterling a year belonging to the Indian people. He fails to see that inadequate land assessments are in principle no less to be condemned.

[1] Mr. Shirras shows (p. 221, *op. cit.*) that this act has resulted in an annual bounty to landowners, paid by the people of India, of over four million sterling. So far was it from benefiting the cultivator that special legislation was necessary to protect him from the bounty-fed landlords.

## NOTE C. THE LAND

The declared policy of the Government of Burma is the retention of the land in the hands of peasant proprietors. During the last twenty years it has become increasingly difficult to carry out this policy owing to the attraction of land as an investment for capitalists, and the tendency of the cultivating owner either to part with his land through debt, or to rise to the more prosperous status of a landlord. In many districts of Lower Burma over half the land is cultivated by the tenants of landowners who often are not agriculturists, and in many cases are not natives of Burma. The latest statistics as to tenancies in Lower Burma excluding the Thayetmyo district, which omit the few privileged and share-produce tenancies, show that out of a total occupied area of 9,678,480 acres 3,703,894 acres were let to tenants at an average rent of Rs. 22 per acre. The majority of these tenants belong to the labouring class, and have little or no capital. They do not cultivate the same land continuously, but move from holding to holding year by year, or relapse to the ranks of hired labourers. Other tenants are rather more substantial men with stock of their own who cultivate as tenants year after year, but generally change to another holding every two or three years. Very rarely is a tenant able to acquire land of his own. Legislation for controlling land alienation and the conditions of tenancy has been anxiously considered from time to time, but so far has been found impracticable. (*Report on the Administration of Burma for the Year 1921–22*, pp. 22, 23.)

NEXT to the village system, the principal concern of the general administration is the land. In Lower Burma, outside towns and villages, land tenures are simple; in Upper Burma they are varied and complicated. Broadly speaking, however, the land belongs everywhere to the State, which has a right to levy rent (called land revenue), but not to evict except for failure to pay rent or (with full compensation) when the land is needed for a public purpose. Under the Burmese king this rent, for agricultural land, was a tenth of the outturn, and was delivered in kind; but the rule was subject to countless exceptions and variations. The same rate, commuted in money each year at the local market price, is still, or was recently, collected in some remote parts. Elsewhere an acre rate is fixed in money for a number of years (usually fifteen or twenty) by a special

officer, who takes into consideration the natural fertility of the soil, the distance of the land from markets, the facilities for transport, and the supply of water, if any, from State irrigation works. If in any year there is a failure or serious shortage of crops, the land revenue, if assessed at all, is remitted or reduced. The advantages of this system over that of the Burmese kings are its convenience, its certainty, and, above all, its avoidance of leakage through dishonest subordinates; for the special officer is one of high rank and above suspicion of corruption or favouritism. Its disadvantage is its inelasticity. In a year of low prices and short crops it takes from the cultivator a far larger proportion of the value of his produce than in a year of high prices and bumper crops.

Theoretically, where the land is nationalized, the State should take the whole of the economic rent of unimproved land.[1] This was actually the case a few years ago in a remote part of the Chindwin valley, where the old Burmese rate of one-tenth of the produce was still levied. Here the abundance of fertile land and the distance from markets combined to make the economic rent very low. Nothing was left for a private landlord after the land revenue was paid. There were therefore no landlords. If a man ceased to work his land, the headman reallotted it to the first comer.

But in some other parts of the country the economic rent is so far above the land revenue that a farmer who holds land direct from the State can cease work, let his land to another, and live on the rent. Thus in the Pegu district, where about half the land is leased, the average rent is not far short of £2 an acre. Out of this the landlord (who does nothing to the land) pays to Government about four shillings as land revenue. An owner of fifty acres can live quite comfortably on the difference.

However, land nationalization in India and Burma is not the outcome of economic theory, but a legacy from native rule; and if any economic principle has been recognized at all it has been applied but half-heartedly. The most favourably situated

[1] Where there is no surplus land available, and holdings are not too small, the economic rent is usually the value of the produce which remains after deducting all costs of cultivation (including wages, if any) and the amount needed to maintain the cultivator and his family at the prevailing standard of comfort. It may be less than this, however, where there is a surplus of land, or more where the holdings are so small that the cultivator's cost of living becomes disproportionately high.

lands are certainly not assessed as highly as they might be. If they were, landlords would be able to exact from the cultivators no higher rents than from lands less favourably situated, which is far from being the case. As we have seen, in some parts of the country landlords are unable to exist; while in others, as the result of settled government, increase of population, and accessibility of the land to international trade, the fortunate owner of fifty acres of agricultural land does not need to do any work.

Failing action on the part of Government, this under-assessment of valuable lands can have but one result—a tendency for them to pass out of the hands of the farmers into those of mere rent-receivers, who do nothing for the land and take from the farmer all the surplus profit which he would otherwise receive owing to the low assessment. There is thus a loss to the community and no gain to any of its useful members. This tendency showed itself in Lower Burma towards the end of the last century. Some of the farmers, raising loans at enormous interest for unproductive purposes, allowed their land to go into the hands of money-lenders; others retired from work to live on the rents. The tendency was temporarily checked by an executive order of 1894, which favoured a landholder[1] who worked his land as against one who let it to others. Hitherto all land not cultivated in any year had been assessed to revenue at one-eighth of the full rate. This privilege was now limited to farmers who could show a good reason, such as the exhaustion of the soil, or sickness or death in the family, or loss of cattle, for leaving the land fallow. Inability to find a tenant was not accepted as a reason for reducing the assessment, and landlords found themselves liable at any time to pay full revenue on lands for which they received no rent. They were unable to hold out for high rents; their lands were thrown on the market; prices and

[1] This term was invented early in the history of the land administration, and represents, it seems, a concession to those officials who wanted to have all land regarded as private property subject to a tax, while the head of the Government insisted on its being retained in the hands of the State. The term "tenant" was objected to by the former, the term "owner" by the latter. A "landholder" is a person who holds land from the State and is liable to rent (or land revenue) for it, but in all other respects is in the position of an owner. "Land revenue" is another neutral term of the same kind, a concession to those who wished the State rent to be regarded as a tax. (See Note B.)

rents of land both fell; many money-lenders were ruined; and the farmers came into their own again. Indeed, many of them did very well for themselves; for when the lands which were once theirs were auctioned by the Government for failure to pay the revenue the agriculturists of the neighbourhood refused to bid for them, and they were able, for a trifling sum, to get them back free of debt.

But the check was only temporary. The rupee was then falling rapidly, and the foreign demand for rice rose in proportion to the fall. In 1897 rents were higher than ever, and after that they rose steadily till the great war. Then difficulties of transport and Government control of prices forced them down again, but in 1920 (in spite of the rapid rise of the rupee, which doubled itself in other currencies) they went up to twenty rupees an acre—twice the figure for 1909 and 1918 and four times that prevailing in the eighties. In 1923, when the rupee had again fallen, the average for the whole province, on lands for which a money rent was paid, was Rs. 22.6, or 30s. an acre.

This tendency of long-occupied lands to pass out of the hands of the farmer is not to be confounded with another evil—the grip of the money-lender on new land which needs capital to clear and develop it. Such land, if a grant is applied for and obtained, is exempt from revenue for a term of years varying with the nature of the forest which covers it. After the annexation of Pegu in 1852 there was considerable migration, carried on in spite of an order of the Burmese king forbidding women to cross the frontier, from the dry zone of Upper Burma, with its slight and uncertain rainfall, to the rich delta lands, depopulated by Burmese misrule after Alaungpăya's conquest. The migration increased with the opening of the Suez Canal, which led to a greater demand for rice in Europe, and again with the annexation of 1886, which removed all frontier difficulties. It became a rush when the British Government constructed embankments and made large areas cultivable for the first time. Traders, money-lenders, labourers, and all kinds of people scrambled for grants, many of them without any intention of bringing the land under cultivation themselves, but hoping either to sell the grant for a substantial sum or to get some genuine cultivator to pay them rent, and perhaps also exorbitant interest on a loan. They might have to wait for both rent and interest, but even if they never received either they got the land cleared for nothing, and in due course came

into a valuable property. An even greater number of grants went to men who cleared the land on borrowed capital, mortgaging it to the lender. Too often they were unable to repay the loan, and the mortgagee foreclosed. It is true that the grants were not transferable during the period of exemption from revenue, or for five years after its expiry; but this provision was not at first enforced. In this way large areas were passing into the hands of Indian and Burman money-lenders and the residents of the towns, when the officials became alive to the facts, and began to evict the holders of the grants of which the provisions had been broken, and to recognize the actual cultivators as holding from the State. At the same time care was taken to issue new grants only to persons who were likely to clear the land themselves with their own money. But the value of land went on increasing. The rupee was now worth in other currencies little more than half its value before the rush for land, and the world-price of rice in rupees had correspondingly risen. There was nothing to prevent anyone from cultivating waste land without a grant if he chose to pay revenue to the State from the first, and there was a law under which he, or his heirs or assigns, became a "landholder" at the end of twelve years' occupancy. It paid anyone with a little capital to advance money to someone who was willing to clear the land and bring it under cultivation, the usual rate of interest being sixty per cent. The lender was given a mortgage on the land, and if he did not get his money back he could, as soon as the land became valuable, foreclose. Grants had become unpopular, but the speculation in land went on as merrily as ever. Again the Government had to interfere. It did so by exercising its right to confiscate land occupied without title for less than twelve years, whenever it was found to be in possession of a person who did not cultivate it himself. After 1906 a decree for such land became worthless. No one would advance money on the security of waste land, or of land over which an unconditional title had not yet been obtained. The boom was over, and with it the rapid extension of cultivation in the delta. But there was now little new land to be had in that part of Burma. Considerable forest areas remained, but it had been found necessary to reserve these for fuel. Rents, as we have seen, were doubled between 1909 and 1920, in spite of the set-back during the war; but the growth of a landlord class was limited to the process described earlier in this chapter.

The result of the failure of the Government to raise the land revenue as rents rose and cultivation spread has been that more than one-fourth of the cultivated land of Lower Burma is in the hands of landlords, few of whom have any connection with agriculture except as rent-receivers. In some districts the proportion is more than half. No doubt it would have been greater still but for the intermittent war waged against money-lenders and speculators—a war which caused a good deal of hardship to individuals, and had no permanent effect. The tendency for land to go out of the hands of cultivators is growing, and is likely to increase in the future if no more effective measures are taken to stop it.

This tendency has long been recognized as an evil, and various causes and remedies have been suggested. There is a common idea that the increase of landlords, and especially of landlords who are not themselves cultivators, is due to the cultivators getting into debt. Strangely enough, this seems to be the very reverse of the truth. If the cultivating landholders did not get into debt there would be more land than now in the hands of landlords. The surplus which now goes year after year to a money-lender would go to a landlord instead.

In 1908 the Government ordered an inquiry into the cause and extent of agricultural indebtedness in the Irrawaddy Division —the western half of the delta—and two years later a report was submitted by Mr. Clayton, now Financial Commissioner, in which he stated the evil to be chiefly due to speculation, and after that to misfortune or extravagance. No doubt these were the prime causes. But indebtedness cannot continue, if the standard of living is maintained, unless the debtor's income is high in proportion to the amount of the debt. If he has no surplus from which to pay the interest and principal, he loses the land, and the debt disappears. If all the cultivators in the Irrawaddy Division had got into debt and lost their land, there would have been no indebtedness to report on. Continued indebtedness is only possible if there is a surplus.

What would happen to this surplus if there were no indebtedness? The answer is supplied by the report. Sooner or later it would go to a landlord. "Flourishing villages and towns of traders," says Mr. Clayton, "are to be found on all the main waterways. These traders have largely invested their savings in the land; and, constantly recruited from the more successful farmers who have ceased themselves to cultivate in person,

have formed a large and important class of landlords." In other words, successful farmers—farmers, that is, who have kept out of debt—have left the land; the unsuccessful ones have remained on it, unless they were so unsuccessful as to lose it to a money-lender. And money-lenders form but a small proportion of the landlords. It has often been observed that they dislike holding land, and get rid of it as soon as possible; some of it, no doubt, to rent-receivers, but much, probably most, to cultivators. We thus arrive at the conclusion that land which has been successfully cultivated, by farmers who keep out of debt, tends to fall into the hands of landlords; that on which there has been only moderate success tends to stay in the hands of cultivators; that on which there has been failure may go to either, but is more likely to return to the possession of cultivators.

This conclusion is not so paradoxical as it may seem. When the price of agricultural produce is rising, cultivating owners get into debt usually owing to extravagance or speculation, or to their going surety for persons who are unable themselves to offer valuable security. They can only raise money, and therefore can only get into debt, if their land has a market value. The greater its value, the more money they are able to raise, and the more deeply they get into debt. Their indebtedness is, in fact, the direct result of their unaccustomed prosperity—of their not knowing what to do with the valuable property (the property of the community) which has come into their hands, except to raise money on it. If they were not allowed to borrow, they would no doubt gradually raise their standard of living. They would spend money, for instance, on the education of their children. As it is, they either get rid of the surplus to a money-lender, or become landlords.

The remedies suggested usually take the form of legislation for the protection of the debtor against the money-lender, and the tenant against the landlord. As to the first, I have already shown that to prevent the cultivator's surplus, or his land, from going to the money-lenders will in the long run only have the effect of increasing the number of landlords and tenants. As to protecting the tenant against the landlord, it does not seem to have occurred to anyone that there were formerly no landlords in Lower Burma, and that the best way to prevent the abuses complained of is to prevent the formation of a landlord class. It is a fact inseparable from all land that a cultivator's surplus, in so far as it does not go in higher wages to his labourers (if

he has any) or a higher standard of living for himself, must sooner or later go to a landlord, unless someone else takes it. The only practical and the only just way of preventing the formation of a landlord class is for the State to take the surplus. It can then spend it for the benefit of the cultivating class (on the education of its children, for instance), or of the country generally.

Though I cannot find that this truth has ever been plainly stated in official documents, a resolution of the Chief Commissioner on the Revenue Administration Report for 1889–90 conveys a hint of it. "Chittagonians in Akyab," wrote Sir Charles Crosthwaite, "Chetties in the neighbourhood of Rangoon, and both Chetties and Chinamen in Maulmein are displacing the original landholders. The result may be deplored; but, considering the facilities for borrowing and the improvidence of the people, it is perhaps inevitable. . . . The incidence of the total demand for land revenue, capitation-tax, and export duty taken together is Rs. 3.27 per acre. . . . The Government demand in Burma is nothing more than a light revenue rate, and does not amount even to half the competition rent of the land. As the cultivator has transferable rights, it is not to be expected that under such circumstances he will refrain from borrowing, nor is it extraordinary that the money-lenders of the trading centres are able and eager to acquire large areas of land which they can let probably to the former owner at more than Rs. 6 per acre, while they only have to pay land revenue. . . . The land revenue in parts of Lower Burma is unduly light, and the loss to the State is hardly compensated by any permanent gain to the actual cultivator."

The statistics show the average rent for the lower province to have been then Rs. 5.39, or 7s. 2d. an acre. In 1910 and 1918 it was Rs. 10, or 13s. 4d. In 1923 it had increased to Rs. 22.6, or 30s. During the same period the land revenue has increased only from Rs. 1.7 (1s. 11d.) to Rs. 2.6 (3s. 2d.) an acre. The capitation-tax and export duty on rice remain the same.

Little more than twenty years before Sir Charles Crosthwaite wrote, another Chief Commissioner, Sir Arthur Phayre, had noted on the report for 1865–6: "Put low rates on land, and your own people will go on increasing cultivation, and new settlers will be brought in. Keep high rates on land, and people, cultivation, and immigration alike stagnate."

Sir Arthur Phayre was undoubtedly right, but the problem was then utterly different. The difficulty had been to get people to cultivate the land to a greater extent than was necessary for

their own subsistence. There was no reason why they should. There was only a small foreign market for rice, almost confined, apparently, to Akyab on the Arakan coast, and it paid better to fish or to exploit the wealth of the forests. There is no record of rentals, probably for the good reason that no land was rented: there was no surplus to be taken in rent. It is likely enough that the land revenue was then too high rather than too low, and this is the constant refrain of some of the earlier reports. But in twenty years rents had already risen from nothing to seven shillings an acre, and in sixty years they have increased to thirty shillings. None of this wealth has gone to the community, though it was made by the community. Sir Charles Crosthwaite certainly did not overstate the case when he wrote that the loss to the State was hardly compensated by any permanent gain to the actual cultivator. Except in so far as the cultivators, as a body, have been able to raise and maintain their standard of living, there has been no permanent gain to them at all.[1]

To demand the full rent now would be a remedy, though a drastic one, for the evil, as it would make all cultivators the direct tenants of the State. But, as I have shown in Note B, it could not be justified on general grounds, as the Government has practically abandoned its right, and large sums have been paid for land in the belief that only a part of the rent would go to the State. It would also reduce many landlords to sudden poverty. I see no reason, however, why in future settlements the difference in rent which has grown up since the last settlement should not be added to the land revenue. This may well result, after all possible allowances have been made for landlords' improvements and expenses, in the land revenue in some parts being quadrupled; for average rents have risen in five years by twelve rupees an acre. But the landlords will be just as well off as they were at the last settlement, when, as we have seen, they were so well off that cultivating owners were retiring to live on the rents of their land. Only those buying land between the settlements would suffer loss. Even they were aware that

[1] The story of how a succession of officers, moved no doubt by sympathy with the cultivators, attempted to limit rents in a remote part of Upper Burma where a landlord class had just begun to form is told by me on pp. 57 to 59 of the *Upper Chindwin Gazetteer*. The orders were cancelled by me because they were not in accordance with the general policy of Government, which is free trade in land, and were economically unsound.

the land revenue was liable to enhancement. Owing to the uncertainty on this point, they bought the land for less than they would otherwise have had to pay. If the enhancement is much greater than they expected, they will suffer ill-luck, but the purchase of land is a speculation, and they must be prepared for loss from this and other causes. The landlords will have smaller incomes than they have enjoyed for several years, and some of the cultivators who have retired to live on the rents may return to the land, but the change will probably be less violent than some of those which I have already noted, and which also were due to the action of the Government.

Some readers may think that an increase in land revenue would result in the landlords raising their rents. But they are presumably getting all they can already from the cultivators. If they raise their rents, their lands will be left vacant. There are still vast areas of good uncultivated land in Burma. Little more than a third of the arable area is worked. If there were any rack-renting, the organized colonization of these virgin lands, with the inducements suggested on p. 194, would soon bring rents down. I do not, however, anticipate that any action will be needed on this ground, though it is advisable as a remedy for low wages and the poverty that leads to crime.

I have dwelt thus at length on the history of agricultural land in Lower Burma because it seems to me to show the futility of political movements for the abolition of landlords, the breaking up of large estates, and the establishment of small holdings, unless the State retains and exercises the right to take and distribute for the benefit of the community that surplus which we call rent. The exercise of that right in no way impairs the advantages of a system of peasant proprietorship, or co-operative or capitalist farming, or whatever plan may be held to suit the community best. On the other hand there is almost universal agreement as to the undesirability of allowing the surplus to go into the hands of a class which does nothing for it, or at any rate of allowing such a class to be formed where it has not previously existed. There is only one way of preventing this which is at once just, effective, and permanent in its effects. That is for the State to take the rent and return it to the people in another form.

In Upper Burma, as I have said, land tenures are varied and complicated, and I do not propose to deal with more than two

or three kinds which are of special interest. One of these is on island lands. There are islands in the Irrawaddy and Chindwin which are not only flooded annually by the river, but which change their shape from year to year, or even disappear to be re-formed elsewhere. Composed of silt, they are exceedingly fertile, and need little or no preparation for the valuable crops—tobacco, beans, and others—which are grown on them. Others are more permanent, but are still liable to erosion.

Such islands are usually treated by custom as the common property of the nearest village. The land is distributed afresh each year (subject to the usual payment of rent to the State) by a committee composed of the headman and elders of the village. Anyone who is discontented can appeal to the Township Officer. On certain islands in the Pakôkku district these appeals became inconveniently frequent, and I arranged for a statement to be prepared and published in the village each year showing the number of mouths to be fed and the number of workers in each household, and the share of the land to which it was entitled on this basis. The division thus became a mere matter of arithmetic based on facts known to all the village. Whether the plan is still followed I do not know.

Permanent lands are not thus subject to an annual distribution, but in some parts of Upper Burma a man may not sell or mortgage his land, though he may pass it on to his natural heirs. If he goes away, he must give it up to be re-allotted by the village authority. If he has too much, the surplus is taken away and re-allotted. In other parts he may sell to a fellow-villager, but not to an outsider. The British Government does not interfere with such customs, and enforces them where necessary. There is a general tendency, however, for all tenures to be assimilated to the Lower Burma system, which is free trade in land subject to payment of a rent (disguised under the name of revenue) to the State.

The system of assessment differs in one important respect from that of Lower Burma. Land is not assessed to revenue unless it is cultivated during the year of assessment. If a man does not choose to make any use of the land he claims as his, he pays nothing, while retaining his right to exact rent if it hereafter becomes valuable. Anybody can get the Government surveyor to enter waste land as his, on the chance that one day someone may want to use it. Thus during a tour on the Chindwin I found an island of the more permanent kind which had become

cultivable two or three years before my visit. It had been appropriated by a neighbouring landowner. He did not do anything to it, but when anyone came and cleared a part of the light jungle which had already sprung up, and began cultivation, he waited till the crop was grown and then demanded rent, saying the island was his. Several settlers paid without question, and the landowner was entered in the records as State tenant of the whole island. Thus are landlords made.

Again, large areas of land in Upper Burma, hitherto almost useless for want of water, and cultivated only partially and occasionally, though entered in the Government maps and registers as the property of individuals, have become productive and valuable through the action of the Government. It was discovered that the ground-nut would thrive on these lands, and that there was a demand for its oil in other countries. Cultivators were instructed accordingly, and something like half a million acres are now under ground-nut. The benefit of this discovery should have been divided between the cultivators, who should have attained a higher standard of comfort, and the community in general. As it is, it has probably given sudden wealth to a large class of landlords, many of whom had never made any use of the land, and had no right to it beyond the fact that they claimed it as theirs and that no one else troubled to do so. In Lower Burma they would not have claimed it, as it would then have been assessed to revenue. All land over which a right to exact rent is claimed should be assessed, at however low a rate, whether use is made of it or not. If it suddenly becomes valuable through the action of the community, the community should get the benefit.

In towns and villages the Burmese king did not exercise his right to levy rent as owner of the soil. It is doubtful, however, whether vacant lands were ever bought and sold, and a house-owner was commonly regarded as having a right to occupy the site of his house only so long as the house stood on it. If the house was dismantled, the site could be re-allotted, either for building or for cultivation, by the headman, any former occupant having the first claim. Conversely, agricultural land converted into a village site was not usually paid for. In Upper Burma this uncertain state of things still continues. In Lower Burma it was ended in 1898 by a law conferring a landholder's right with respect to all land occupied for twelve years without a grant or lease; and slum-owners must now be rewarded for

overcrowding and rack-renting by the payment of heavy compensation before they can be dispossessed. The greater the number of houses huddled into a small space without roads, drainage, or air and light, the larger the sum that must be paid.

Rangoon[1] and Maulmein were excluded from this part of the Act, and in certain other towns longer terms were required to establish a landholder's right. In the remainder the land was apparently reported to be not worth reserving.[2] Such a

[1] All land in Rangoon was declared in 1852 to be public property. If it had been retained, the people of Rangoon would probably now be in the happy position of having to pay no rates and of enjoying a handsome income to spend on the improvement of the city. Unfortunately all the more valuable lands were gradually sold at a small fraction of their present value, and little remained in 1872 but unreclaimed swamps. On these squatters were allowed to erect temporary buildings, and as they had no security of tenure they were charged very low rents pending reclamation. Owing to the failure of the responsible officials to assess adequate rents, even on land which had been reclaimed and equipped at great cost, the fund accumulated from the sales of the land was faced with bankruptcy, and in 1914 the work of development had to be suspended. Many occupants of leased lands paid full economic rents, but most of the proceeds went into private hands. In 1921 the Rangoon Development Trust was formed to remedy this state of affairs, but the squatters had been allowed to remain in occupation so long that the assessment of adequate rents was resisted, and the resistance was supported by public opinion. Eventually a compromise was arrived at, enhancements being limited to a fixed proportion of the old rents for the next ten years in the town and fifteen in the suburbs. An Arakanese member of the Legislative Council asserted, apparently with the approval of most of the members present, that the Government had a right to levy only taxes, not rents. In other words, when the Government spent £1,000 in reclaiming a piece of marshy land belonging to the public, it was its duty to take the £1,000 out of the people's pockets, to give the land away, preferably to someone who had built a house on it in spite of a legal prohibition, and to allow the donee to sell the land immediately at its enhanced value, say £2,000. That public officials and legislatures are bound to protect the property of the public is no better understood in Burma than it is in England.

[2] No doubt the people did not regard it as having a saleable or rental value apart from the houses on it. The reader may find this idea hard to grasp, but it is common enough in countries where the acquisitive instinct is less developed than in Europe. Thus in the Nicobars, according to Mr. Whitehead (*In the Nicobar Islands*) uncultivated land may be owned by an individual, whose leave must be obtained to work it; but leave is granted as a matter of course, unless the owner wants to use the land himself. "The very idea of rent for land or house seems almost incomprehensible to the Nicobarese mind."

report was certainly made some years earlier with respect to Mergui, where, soon after the Act of 1898 was passed, land in the busy part of the town was being bought and sold at a price of several thousand pounds per acre.

The practice of the Government is to levy rent only on land which has been leased or licensed for building. At one time such leases, though they carried with them an obligation to pay rent, were eagerly sought after. Then people began to realize that a house built on vacant Government land without permission could be sold for at least as much as a similar house on leased land; and after the law of 1898 was passed the squatters who owned these houses were, of course, in a much better position than lessees. The luckiest people of all were those who (often in defiance of orders, which were not enforced owing to the want of legal machinery and the ignorance of officials) had squatted for twelve years or more on valuable foreshore lands. Under the Act these lands could be excluded from its operation by a notification, and a notification was issued excluding them. Unfortunately it was not issued simultaneously with the Act, and was consequently void.

The Act, however, does not bind the State never to levy land revenue on building-land which has been occupied for twelve years. It exempts from land revenue all plots in towns and villages which are occupied by, or appertain to, dwelling-houses, and do not exceed a quarter of an acre in extent; but there is nothing to prevent this law from being altered, and the exemption removed. All land not held under lease or revenue-free grant could then be assessed to land revenue gradually approaching the economic rent.

The objection to this course is that most town lands are now regarded as being free from either rent or tax, and that many people have paid huge sums for them in the belief that they would remain so. Any land revenue or rent now imposed on them would have the effect of a tax on landlords, and might, as I have pointed out when dealing with agricultural lands, unduly penalize them as compared with owners of other kinds of property. No doubt the value of town lands was enormously enhanced by the Act of 1898, and landlords were presented with an undeserved bounty. They should have been made to pay a part-rent to the State in return for the legal claim against the State then conferred on them for the first time. But the mischief has been done, and cannot now be undone. The only just way

now remaining to secure the unearned increment is to buy the land at its present market price.

It may be thought that any increase in value which the land may acquire in the future should be secured for the community, the landlords being left to enjoy their present rents intact. But such increases have already been allowed for, at least in part, in the price paid by the buyers for the land. The objection that a demand for rent would be in the nature of a special tax on landlords would still apply, though not to the same extent.

Action can still be taken, however, to secure the full rent on lands which are newly occupied or of which the leases have expired. The lease system is unnecessary, and unfair to both parties. On the one hand it binds the Government not to raise the rent for an inordinate number of years, usually thirty, during which period the land may have so increased in value that the lessee is able to sell his lease for a very large sum. On the other, it produces needless uncertainty in the mind of the lessee as to what will happen to the land and the buildings thereon at the expiry of his lease. Provided a man obtains permission to build on vacant land from the proper authorities, and that the land is duly demarcated, there is no reason why he should not at once be given full rights of possession and transfer for ever,—the same rights as are acquired by twelve years' squatting. But he should be made to pay the full economic rent. This can and should be calculated from the record of sales of land in the neighbourhood, and should be revised annually if the value of land is rising rapidly, or at longer intervals if it is not. The assessment should not, as is often done now, be left to persons who are supposed to know from their inner consciousness what land is worth. A fair assessment will prevent land from acquiring a selling price, but will not impair the value of any buildings there may be on it. In other words, the buildings will sell for what they are worth apart from the value of the land, no more and no less. If land is wanted for a public purpose, it will only be necessary to pay their value together with compensation for disturbance, which might well be on a more liberal scale than now.

It may be found convenient to assess the rent in the form of a percentage on the selling value of the land, as is done in the United States, Japan, and some other countries. The effect is the same, and the payment is none the less a rent because it is calculated on the value.

The community in general (represented by the provincial

government) and the townspeople (represented by the municipal committee) have between them made the value of the land, and it seems fair that they should divide the proceeds of any levy that may be made.

In Upper Burma, when legal rights are conferred, all land occupied by buildings for less than twelve years could be assessed in the same way. Land held for more than twelve years might be assessed to a lower percentage in consideration of the facts that in Lower Burma twelve years' possession has conferred a right to hold the land rent-free, and that even in Upper Burma long-occupied land may have changed hands at a high price in the belief that it will always be so held. Some rent (or percentage on value) should certainly be exacted in return for the newly granted legal right of occupation.

## NOTE D. CAPITATION-TAX

THOUGH the Burmese King was mentioned in Note C as taking one-tenth of the outturn of agricultural land, this form of taxation was by no means uniform. Taxes varied from place to place, and might be levied on each plough, or each yoke of oxen, or each household. In Upper Burma, before the annexation in 1886, a household tax was imposed in some cases in lieu of, in others in addition to, a share of the crop. In Pegu, thirty-five years earlier, there seems to have been some kind of a household-tax as well as a plough-tax. In Arakan, twenty odd years earlier still, a household-tax seems to have been converted under our rule into a capitation-tax, judging from remarks of the Court of Directors in letters to the Governor-General of Bengal on the subject of Arakan. In 1831 the Directors wrote :— "We concur with you entirely in the desire to substitute throughout the province an equitable assessment in land for the cess on houses and families, which was the principal source of revenue under the Burmese Government, and in which form it would seem the present settlements continue to be made." (*Bengal Dispatches*, cxviii. 641.) On the 28th February, 1841, we find them writing again:—"We regret that you have not been able to effect the entire abolition of the capitation-tax, and we concur in opinion with the Commissioner, Captain Bogle . . . that it would be impolitic to substitute an export duty on grain. . . . At the same time we continue of opinion that the capitation-tax is open to the most serious objection, and we must express our most earnest wish that this tax may be withdrawn with as little delay as possible." (*India and Bengal Despatches*, xxvi. 270.)

The comparative merits of the land revenue and the poll-tax (or capitation-tax) were thereafter the subject of frequent controversy between the local officers and the Government of India. The former defended the tax. A Tenasserim report of 1851 says the five rupees demanded were "but one-twenty-fourth part of a steady man's wages for a year, and the thirty-sixth part of a good surveyor's. When labour is at its lowest, it does not

exceed one-fourteenth or one-fifteenth the labourer's income." One wonders what the Englishman of 1851 would have thought of an income-tax of one and fourpence in the pound. A graphic description by Captain Hopkinson, Principal Assistant Commissioner, in the revenue report of the Tenasserim Province for 1851–2, supports the advocates of the poll-tax, though it actually refers to the land revenue. "The land-tax is easy of collection and is paid readily and willingly, of what the people have of comforts and necessaries; they seem to have abundance, nor do they even want the means to purchase luxuries. The peasant in Bengal leads a very dog's life in comparison with the peasant in Tenasserim, and I will answer for it that the wife of the latter, who flaunts in silk dresses and gold ornaments on gala days, spends often more in a year on the single item of flowers than the wife of the former spends in the same time on the food of her husband and family. An early riser in Maulmein will meet in his walk sawyers and day-labourers going to their work in hack-carriages, and other hack-carriages taking their wives to market." Sir Arthur Phayre's words advocating a low rate of land revenue have already been quoted on p. 218. He also wrote, in the Revenue Administration Report of British Burma for 1865–6 :—" There is no reason for concluding that the capitation-tax has any baneful effect upon the industry or the increase of the people. The effects of it should, however, be carefully watched year by year. Should it be shown to be injurious to the people, physically or morally, an efficient substitute for it may be found in the tax on ground covered by buildings. This might be extended over the country generally. No doubt it would be a fairer tax than the capitation-tax. For where the poor man's house might be assessed on the area at two rupees per annum, the rich man's would have to pay ten or twenty times that amount."

On this the Government of India commented :—"The theoretical objections to which a tax of this nature are confessedly exposed are not realized in practice. It is clear from Colonel Phayre's remarks that this has not been the case yet. On the contrary, the tax appears to be congenial with the habits of the people; and the easiness of its collection, in connection with the comparative lightness of the salt-tax in British Burma, diminishes the force of the objections drawn from its unequal pressure."

In towns where foreigners lived a tax on ground covered with buildings (referred to by Sir Arthur Phayre in the remarks

quoted above) was substituted for the capitation-tax. It is amusing to read that "this plan has been adopted because Europeans and many settlers from India object to a poll-tax." This land-tax still exists, but is limited by law to about Rs. 22–8 (30s.) an acre, and is levied only on the poorest owners, those who pay income-tax being exempt.

There can be no doubt that in the early days of our occupation of Lower Burma the poll-tax was justified by the absence of any other suitable source of revenue, the equality of wealth then prevailing, and the need for encouraging agriculture. But every circumstance which once justified its levy has long ceased to exist. Instead of there being a difficulty in finding other sources of revenue, a small addition to the land revenue would be enough to replace it. Instead of an equality of income between cultivating owners and labourers, the former are incomparably better off than they were even fifty years ago, and the latter actually poorer. Instead of a need to encourage cultivation by light taxation of the land, the present level of rents shows that an average land revenue of seven times the amount now fixed would hardly discourage cultivation. Instead of the salt-tax being lighter than in India, it has been steadily raised till it stands at double the Indian rate. I can find no justification now either for the capitation-tax or for the corresponding tax on households in Upper Burma. Both should be abolished as soon as the loss can be made good by increasing the land revenue. The Income Tax Act could at the same time be extended to Upper Burma, where it is not now in force, though income-tax is levied on officials' salaries.

# INDEX


Administration under British, 66–86, 172–4, 179–85, 193–7, Notes to Chap. IV (201–29)
Administration under Burmese king, 63–6, 201, 211
Adultery, 60
Akyab jail outbreak, 154–6
Alcohol, 19, 79, 80, 103
Alphabet, 23, 24
Amok, running, 36–7
Amusements, 51
" Anglo-Indian," 88 (footnote)
Animals, wild, 146–53
Animism, 102, 103, 110–17
Apes, 147
Armaments, 191–2
Art, 40–2

" Bad livelihood," 84–6
Bathing, 47, 49; sea-, 140
Birds' nests, 139
Bitter rain-water, 39–40
Blue patch, 31–2
Boarding-schools, 96, 98–9
Bribery, *see* Corruption
Buddhism, 102–11
  women, 53
  tolerance, 89, 168
  education, 91–2, 170
  the drama, 118, 122–4
  politics, 169, 171
Burman, meaning of term, 21

Cannibalism, 116–17
Capitation-tax, 77–8, Note D (227–9)
Carving, 40–1
Caves, 138–40
Character, *see* Temperament
Children, 37–8
Chindwin, The, 130–6, 3, 7, 14
Chins, 42–3
Circle Boards, 71–2, 173–4, 188–90
Civil service, 69, 72–7
Climate, 3–5, 2, 194, 195
Clothing, *see* Dress
Colonization, 193–5, 196
Condition of the people, *see* Economic conditions
Constitution—
  for Burma, *see* Reform scheme
  British, —, 174–7
Co-operative societies, 196
Corruption, 35, 70, 71, 73–4, 76–7, 84, 165–6
Cost of living, 45–52, 81–2, 83
Courtship, 51, 53, 163
Crime, 82–6, 159–65, 191, 193–5
Crocodiles, 137
Customs duties, 77–8, 193, 196

*Da*, 47
Death customs, 60–2
Deer, 146, 147
Democracy, 174–83, 185–90
District Councils, 71–2, 173–4, 188–90
Divorce, 54
Domestic life, 45–62
Drama, The, 118–29
Dress, 48–9, 51–2
  of Nagas, 132–3
Drinking-water, 47–8

East India Company, 142–3
Economic conditions, 45–52, 81–2, 83–4, 86–8, 191–7, 212–20
Education, 90–101, 17, 50, 52, 77, 103–4, 170
Elephants, trade in, 141
Eurasians, 88 (footnote)
Evidence, testing of, 158–60
Excise duties, 77, 79
Expenditure, State, 77, 81, 92–3

Fables, 39–40
False charges, 160–2
Finance, 77–9, Notes B and C (205–29)
Fishery revenue, 79
Food, 50
Forests, 77, 79
Freedom, 86–9
Funerals, 41, 60
  of monks, 106–7

Geography, physical, 1–4, 13–15
Ghosts, 61
Gibbons, 147

Hair, 30, 49–50, 157–8
Head-hunting, 133–6
Headmen, *see* Village system, Ward headmen
  and Reform scheme, 171–2, 173–4, 178, 188–90
Health, 5–7, 50–1, 69
Hinduism, 102, 104, 109
History, 8–13, 19–20, 63–6
  educational, 90–1
  Mergui, 141–3
  village system, 201–3
  land, 213–9, 221–4
  capitation-tax, 227–9
Home-rule, 186–90
Honorary Magistrates, 71
Hospitals, 50–1, 69, 72
Household-tax, 77–8, Note D (227–9)
Housing, 476–7
Human sacrifices, 114–16, 131–2
Humour, 38–40

Immigration, 2, 84, 191, 193–4, 195
Income, 45–6
Indebtedness, 214–18
India—
  comparison with, 46, 47, 64–5, 82–3, 84, 87, 88–9, 91, 101, 104, 191
  relations with, 1, 2, 64–5, 84, 190–1, 195, 196
Indians, 46, 47–8, 64–5, 83–4, 87, 88–9, 194, 195
Industrialism, 86–9, 191–3, 195
Inheritance, 54, 56–8
  among Khasis, 55–6
Inoculation, 157

Japanese language, 27–8
Jatakas, 122–3

Kăchins, 16, 130–1
Kădus, 19
Kărens, 43–4
Khasis, 55–6, 28

Land, 72–3, 77, 79, 81, Notes B and C (205–29)
  revenue, 77, 79, 81, 195, 196, 207–10, 212–20, 222
  tenures, 211, 220–6
Language, 21–28
  in Mergui district, 143
Liberty, 86–9
Living, cost of, 45–52, 81–2, 83
Local government, 66–72, 177–8, 188

Magistrates, 71, 73
Malaria, 5–7, 195

Mandalay, 8, 11, 14–15
riot at, 171
Marionettes, 121
Markets, 52, 69, 72, Note B (205–10)
Marriage, 53–4, 59–60, 88
Matriarchy, 54–8
Mergui, 141–3
Archipelago, 137–40
District, 137–45
massacre at, 143
Military power, 191–2
Min Magayi, 61, 113, 115
Missions, 43–4, 93, 96
Monasteries, 103–6, 16, 50, 91–2, 168, 170
Money-lenders, 214–18
Monkeys, 147–53, 141
Monks, 17, 50, 91–2, 103–7, 168, 170–1
Mon language, 28
Mons, 19–20, 190–1
Mosquitoes, 4–7
Municipal government, 69–71, Note B (205–10)
Music, 120, 127–8

Nagas, 18–19, 63, 130–6
Nakedness, 36, 49
of Nagas, 19
of Sălôns, 144
Nationalists, 186–8
"Native," 88 (footnote)
Nawyăta's queen, 41, 116

Officials, 72–7, 69
Oktama, U, 170–1, 180–3
Opium, 79–80

Pagoda festivals, 51
Pagodas, 15, 169–70
Parliamentary government, 174–9, 181, 183–4
Pauk Tyaw, story of, 42, 126–7
Pegu, 20
People, the—
condition, *see* Economic conditions
race and character, 16–44
Physical—
characteristics of people, 28–32
geography, 1–4, 13–15
Pigmentation, 31–2
Piracy, 138
Plays, 118–29
Poetry, 119–20, 128–9
Poison, 36
Political—
agitation, 168–72, 174–6, 179–83, 186–8
organization under Burmese kings, 63–6
Population, 7, 8, 93
Prices, 46, 81
Processions, 60
Proverbs, 38–9
Pyus, 19

Race, 16–21, 28–32
Race-consciousness, 190–1
Racial changes, 16–21, 143
Railways, 2, 191
Rain-making, 102, 108, 109–10, 117
Rates, 69
Reform scheme, 172–4, 179–90
Religion, 102–17, 50, 53, 89
Tăman, 17–8
and education, 91–2
Naga, 131–2, 133
Government attitude towards, 170
Rent, 69, 79, Notes B and C (205–26)
in towns and villages, 222–6
Revenue, 77–9, 195, 196, 207–10, 212–20, 222–6
Rice export-duty, 78

Sălôns, 144–5
Salt-tax, 79, 228, 229

Saramati, 133
Scholarships, 93, 96–9
Schools, *see* Education
Sedition, 170–2, 180–3
Self-government, 63–4, 66–72, 172–4, 177–8, 183–90
Shans, 16–17, 42, 130
Shoe-question, 168–70
Shops, 52
Siamese, 143
Sickness, treatment of, 50–1, 62, 69
*Silken East, The*, 40, 42 (footnote), 76,
Slavery, 130–1
Smallpox, 157
Smoking, 50
Snake-worship, 110–12, 113, 115
Songs, 119–20, 128–9
Spirits, 60–1, 112–16
Surveys, 81
Swimming, 98, 140, 145

Tălaings, 19, 20
Tămans, 17–18
Taungthas, 42–3
Taxes, 77–9, 81–2, Notes B, C, D (205–29)
Temperament, 31, 32–8, 84, 88–9
Tenasserim, 141
*Thathameda, see* Household-tax
Theatres, 118
Tin Dè, Maung, 61, 113
Tobacco, 50, 79
Tones, 22–3
Town lands, 222–6
Towns, 8
Travelling, 48
Tree-worship, 113–14
Two-party government, 174–7, 183

Village—
  communities, 63–4, 185–6
  headmen, *see* system
  headmen and reform scheme, 171–2, 173–4, 178, 188–90
  system under British government, Note A (201–4), 66, 68, 73, 81, 171–2, 173–4, 178, 185–6
  system under Burmese King, 63–6, 67–8, 188, 201–2

Wage-earners, 83–4, 86–8, 191, 192, 193–5
Wages, 46, 83, 84, 193–5
Ward headmen, 67, 70–1
Wild animals, 146–53
Witchcraft, 156–7
Women, 37, 53–60, 88
  votes for, 172

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN
BY UNWIN BROTHERS, LIMITED
PRINTERS, LONDON AND WOKING

00084742

Digitized with financial assistance from

HT Parekh FOUNDATION

An Initiative by HDFC

WITH YOU, RIGHT THROUGH

on 15 October, 2018